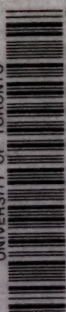


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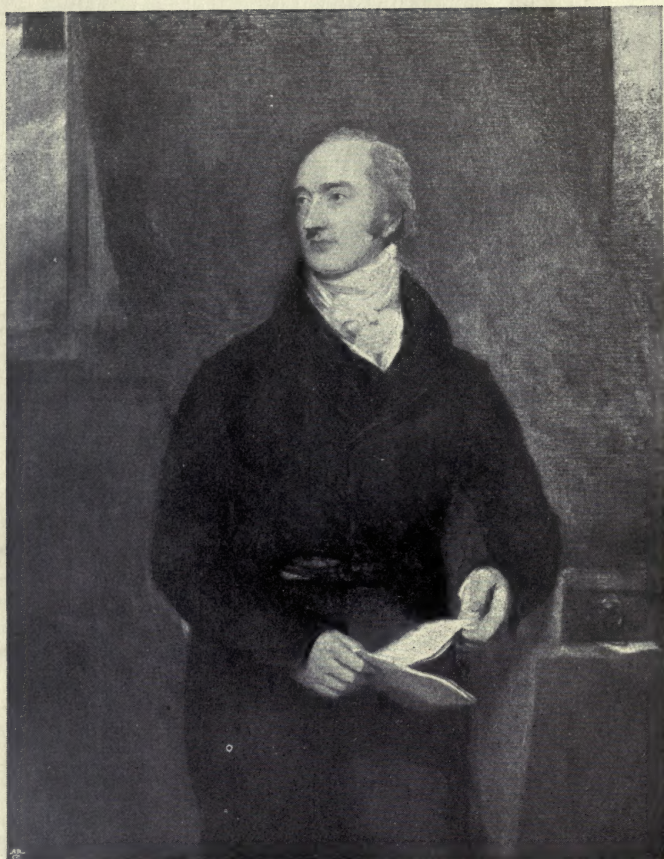
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# LIFE OF CANNING

BY

H. W. V. TEMPERLEY

FELLOW OF PETERHOUSE AND LATE ALLEN SCHOLAR AND PRINCE  
CONSORT PRIZEMAN IN CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY—LECTURER  
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# LIFE OF CANNING

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## CORRIGENDA.

Page 74, line 3:—The passage beginning "*Intelligence reached me*" is quoted from Dr. Rose's '*Napoleonic Studies*.'

Page 92, note †: For "*Dr. Rose seems to omit this in his calculations*" read "*Dr. Rose seems to omit the full force of this in his calculations.*"

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that no one can read parts of his great work without impatience. Such to some extent has been the fate of Canning. A great part of his life-work was the dissolution of the so-called Holy Alliance, and the assertion of the principle that every nation had a right to manage its own internal affairs. The triumph of nationalism during the last century has so fully accepted these premises that no one inquires who formulated them. No one now infers that the meeting of the Czar and the Kaiser will result in a combination against the liberties of the world, no one imagines the Hague Conference will turn into a union of governments against peoples. Many of the difficulties with which Canning contended are now unthinkable, and some of his principles have descended from novelty to platitude. But even so, great honour should be paid to their earliest upholder, to the man who first foresaw and promoted the growth of national liberty on the Continent of Europe, when a league of despots had a real existence and when freedom of opinion was more an ideal than a fact. Apart from its international character the policy of Canning abounds in lessons for the England of to-day. His views on the Eastern question, on the relations between the Old World and the New, on the commercial supremacy and political





# LIFE OF CANNING

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## INTRODUCTION

SOME great men have had to endure the misfortune of attaining too complete success. Bentham's great reforms in the criminal law are so perfected and achieved that his name and influence are in danger of being forgotten. Adam Smith so absolutely destroyed the old fallacy that bullion was wealth that no one can read parts of his great work without impatience. Such to some extent has been the fate of Canning. A great part of his life-work was the dissolution of the so-called Holy Alliance, and the assertion of the principle that every nation had a right to manage its own internal affairs. The triumph of nationalism during the last century has so fully accepted these premises that no one inquires who formulated them. No one now infers that the meeting of the Czar and the Kaiser will result in a combination against the liberties of the world, no one imagines the Hague Conference will turn into a union of governments against peoples. Many of the difficulties with which Canning contended are now unthinkable, and some of his principles have descended from novelty to platitude. But even so, great honour should be paid to their earliest upholder, to the man who first foresaw and promoted the growth of national liberty on the Continent of Europe, when a league of despots had a real existence and when freedom of opinion was more an ideal than a fact. Apart from its international character the policy of Canning abounds in lessons for the England of to-day. His views on the Eastern question, on the relations between the Old World and the New, on the commercial supremacy and political

influence of England have lost neither their truth nor their interest. Disraeli may have seen the future but his Roumelian policy is already of the past, Chatham was marvellously successful for the moment but his gratuitous humiliations of France were the cause of future disasters. For Canning alone among English statesmen can we make the double claim that his own work has been permanent and indestructible, whilst his visions of the future have in some measure approached to reality. This it is which throws over the details of his policy something more than the charm and the mystery of the past. The principles which he laid down, though their application may now be different, should still be the guide and polar star of our course.

Within the last few years England has been pledged to an alliance with one power, and has signed a treaty settling all outstanding difficulties with another. Our alliance has already made a war possible in Asia whilst it would be idle to deny that our settlement with France does not imply some change of our policy in Europe. There is here no desire to censure, no attempt even to criticize either of these momentous steps. It is enough to say that before each was taken there was no definite or even perhaps perceptible impulse from the people, who are yet supposed to direct all government. Lack of interest in foreign policy, except in the broadest outline, is a feature of Englishmen to-day. Perhaps this is the reason why the man whom Lord Acton termed our greatest foreign minister has waited so long for his biographer. Mr. A. G. Stapleton, his private secretary, indeed published two laborious works in his defence—"The Political Life of Canning," and the "Life and Times of George Canning." The former is a successful but tedious defence of his later foreign policy, but more of the nature of a polemic than a history. The latter is a collection of letters and memoranda linked together by a most discursive and heavy commentary, golden beads indeed, but strung on the most tawdry and commonplace of threads. Stapleton knew little of Canning's life before 1815, and made no attempt to trace the connection between his earlier and later policies, whilst his argumentative and apologetic attitude did not admit of critical conclusions, broad views, or final estimates.

There must be added to the works of Stapleton "The Memoirs of George Canning," a bookseller's venture, consisting chiefly of press-cuttings, (1828) and "The Life" by L. T. Rede, which is anecdotal and untrustworthy. Bell was the



first writer except Stapleton, who could pretend to any accuracy, and his work has been supplemented and corrected in the bright and vigorous sketch of Mr. Frank H. Hill (1888). Neither of these writers made any serious effort to treat the foreign policy, dealing almost exclusively with the social and personal side of Canning's character. Even upon this subject a good deal of new matter has since been made known. Of late there have been published two short lives of Canning by Mr. J. A. R. Marriott and Mr. W. Alison-Phillips, but neither of these is written from any but printed sources or adds substantially to our knowledge of the period or the man.

Three-quarters of a century should be sufficient to reveal the true proportions of a statesman, and to enable us to weigh and balance the good and evil, the failure or success of his policy. Canning has waited long enough for a biographer, and to delay longer in the hope that fresh materials will be found is as though Columbus were to put off crossing the Atlantic until steam had been invented. Our chart, unlike that of the great explorer, should be ample and accurate. It should be now possible to check the vast mass of statements in the memoirs, lives and histories of the time, by the closest comparison with the original materials, and to reconstruct the broad outlines of his policy and character. That policy I believe to have been often misinterpreted, that character often misunderstood. If a final judgment is impossible, we should at least be able to give an estimate approximating to finality. Research has convinced me that the old and oft-disputed questions are capable if not of settlement, at least of an instructive re-statement. Lately published works as well as the records help us to understand Canning's change of opinion in 1792, his difference with Pitt and Addington, his resignation in 1809 and his acceptance of office in 1816. The famous Danish expedition of 1807 has already been criticized anew, though not with full and complete knowledge. The Record Office provides despatches in 1807-9, which remarkably foreshadow the later policy from 1822-7. Further, they afford such evidence of the exact relations between Castlereagh and Canning from 1818-22 as to make that question (which after all is in many ways the central and vital point of Canning's policy) no longer capable of doubt. They show that the advocates of both ministers have assumed untenable positions. If Canning did not completely change a policy in 1822 there is equal evidence that Castlereagh did not devise one in 1818 without much assistance from Canning.

In general the time seems at last to have arrived for estimating and criticizing Canning's policy in its immediate and ultimate results, in its details as well as in its principles, in all its breadth and depth and extent. The absence of any modern work has sometimes compelled lengthier notes and a somewhat fuller treatment and discussion than is suitable for a narrative. But there is no paragraph to which a string of authorities could not have been attached or a lengthier treatment given. I have attempted, as Canning himself would say, "by absolute neutrality to hold the balance between the two conflicting principles" of eulogy and depreciation. Especially have I endeavoured to avoid the familiar disease of the biographer, which places scales on his eyes and induces him to believe his hero the sole life and source of the age. If the life of the man is impressed on the times, the life of the times yet influences the character of the man. Thus it must be admitted that Canning was sometimes the mere representative of his epoch, that in some respects he was behind the best thought of the age, just as in others he was before it. The relations of condition and environment, the influence of the deep impersonal elements of history, the self-moving power of ideas and of forces, all these must be studied before we can appreciate the influence of human personality. In the study of personal character—especially a character so complex and subtle as that of Canning—sympathy is as essential to the understanding as impartiality is necessary to the judgment. To be able to praise every virtue need not prevent us from censuring every fault. The great man is not less of a divinity because his follies and weaknesses are revealed, he is only more human and therefore more easy to understand. There may be some to question the justice of this historical canon, there will undoubtedly be many to criticize its application in the present instance. Without the slightest wish to deprecate censure it is possible to point out that the work here undertaken is new, as no biography of Canning yet exists, that the extent of the materials is almost infinite, and that they abound in slanders and mis-statements. In opening this Pandora's box of evil passions Hope may indeed be found at the bottom but Truth is buried at a deeper level still.

The manuscript and original sources used are several. First, there are the drafts of Canning's official despatches in the Record Office, which are a full, final and authoritative exposition of policy. They have been freely used and are frequently quoted in the text. There are also Castlereagh's



despatches—from 1818 onwards—of which the secret and supplementary despatches to Stewart are of immense value and importance as exhibiting the real tendencies of his mind and policy. The British Museum has about twenty original letters of Canning which throw light on some obscure points of his life and especially on his work at the Board of Control. More valuable than these last are the papers and correspondence of Sir Robert Wilson, who was acquainted with the chief Liberal leaders of the English Opposition and was also a friend and confidant of Canning.\* Wilson was personally known to the Czar Alexander and many of the foreign diplomats, and yet also corresponded with the leading thinkers and revolutionists of Europe from Dumouriez and Stein to Bolivar and Ivernois. The chequered character of his career may be gathered from the fact that he was at one time official commander-in-chief in Portugal, at another a mere soldier of fortune, whilst in diplomacy he was by turns an English ambassador, an agent, a spy and something very like a conspirator. It is certain that no private individual of the age knew more of the secret history of Europe. His letters also throw much light upon the formation of Canning's ministry in 1827. In general, these original and authoritative sources of information for the first time enable a fairly adequate estimate to be made of Canning's work and character. This may indeed be corrected in detail from foreign archives and from private and as yet unpublished letters, but the evidence is comparatively complete and at least sufficient to remove some of the vast accretion of tradition and calumny, which has accumulated round the names of Castlereagh and Canning.

Of printed sources, consisting chiefly of documents and dealing primarily with the policy and not the life of Canning, there are not as many as could be desired. The first authorities for the whole period are Canning's letters and memoranda in A. G. Stapleton's two works, his speeches, and that part of his correspondence published by E. J. Stapleton. On his first tenure at the Foreign Office—besides MSS. sources—almost the only authority is the very valuable "Diary of Sir John Moore," the commentary on which is occasionally somewhat prejudiced. There are some valuable articles in the "English Historical Review" by Dr. Rose, who has been the first English writer to appreciate the

\* His private journal has been published but only reaches to 1814. His pamphlet on the negotiations of 1827 is interesting but the unpublished correspondence is more explicit.



Napoleonic struggle in the light of modern research. But with his special views on Canning's Danish expedition and Napoleon's commercial policy, after a careful study of documents, I have found myself sometimes unable to agree. For the years 1816-22 Castlereagh's published Despatches are, by reason of their large omissions, often most misleading and deceptive. Wellington's\* despatches cover the whole period, but the picture they give is very far from complete, and needs to be filled in and corrected from original and other sources. On the policy towards the New World, Mr. Reddaway's "Monroe Doctrine" is full of extracts from MSS sources and accurate, useful and valuable, but it deals almost exclusively with the policy of the United States. The Diaries of Rush and Adams and the letters of Stratford Canning are also useful. For Canning's dealings with Spain, France, Portugal and Brazil, there is almost nothing but the somewhat scattered notices in Wellington's despatches, and Lady Canning's very valuable but too brief pamphlet upon Portugal. The Eastern Policy is well dealt with in Poole's admirable *Life of Stratford Canning*, but the point of view is always that of Constantinople not of London. There are, however, some highly interesting extracts from Stratford's diary and memoirs, and some priceless letters from George Canning. Of foreign authorities Metternich's *Memoirs*, the *Correspondence of Gentz* and the *Letters of Princess Lieven* are all interesting and important. Chateaubriand has described the events of 1822-4 in the *Congrès de Vérone* with comparative truth and superlative eloquence, accompanied by a positive display of documents. Of the more † general histories based upon manuscript sources there are only two of any value in English—Fyffe's *Modern Europe* and Dorman's *History of the British Empire*. Fyffe was the first Englishman to appreciate the connection between Castlereagh and Canning, but his work, though admirable in many respects, is somewhat prejudiced and contains some extraordinary mis-statements about Canning. Dorman does not go beyond 1825 and misunderstands Canning's Danish policy, though adding something to our knowledge of the years 1818-25. Of the

\* The documents published therein are often those which had passed the Cabinet-mill; hence the unrevised drafts in the Record Office, have an interest which they sometimes lack.

† Spencer Walpole bases his *History of England* only upon printed documents and, though valuable for his general survey, is far too unfair to Castlereagh, whilst he insists upon regarding Canning with too emotional an eye.

foreign historians, Sorel, whose authority is unsurpassed, has not come far enough, whilst Seignobos affords no more than a useful outline. The rest are either somewhat antiquated or deal only with portions of the period. Of the latter class far the most valuable is Albert Vandal's "*Napoleon et Alexandre Ire*, though his sources like his views are exclusively French.

Of works dealing with more personal and biographical details, after Stapleton's various works "*Hookham Frere and his Friends*," lately published by Miss Gabrielle Festing, contains much valuable material, especially in confidential letters from Canning to Frere. I believe this work has been used by no previous biographer. Bartle Frere's *Memoir*—prefixed to the collected works of Hookham Frere—contains some interesting matter, and is useful in assigning the authorship of pieces in the "*Anti-Jacobin*." J. F. Newton's pamphlet, "*The early days of George Canning*," and Stratford de Redcliffe's "*Recollections of Canning*" in the "*Nineteenth Century*" (Jan. 1880), have some curious details from absolutely authentic sources. The *Memoirs of Lord Malmesbury* and R. P. Ward describe the early career of Canning, but both are apt to be untrustworthy and need to be carefully checked. Every memoir of the time from the numerous lives and recollections of Sheridan and Wilberforce to Greville's scandal and Brougham's abuse, yields a store of anecdote gossip and calumny about Canning which requires sifting and winnowing. The most valuable besides those already mentioned are the works of Lords Ashbourne and Rosebery upon Pitt, Tom Moore's *Diary*, Spencer Walpole's "*Perceval*" and Lockhart's "*Life of Scott*," the Duke of Buckingham's "*Memoirs of the Courts and Cabinets of George III. and IV.*" Yonge's "*Life of Lord Liverpool*," Sir Herbert Maxwell's "*Wellington*," and the Croker and Creevey papers. The last named give a valuable insight into the workings of the Opposition of the day and have many curious details, expressed in language of uncompromising vigour. But in general Creevey was ill-formed and malicious with regard to Canning himself, though he makes us feel the spirit which animated his opponents. The essays of Hazlitt, Brougham, Mackintosh and Adams, the endless squibs of Moore, a particularly imaginary conversation by Landor, and Sydney Smith's letters of Peter Plymley are valuable estimates by contemporaries of insight and ability. Pamphlets, poems, broadsides and press-articles innumerable show the throb of contemporary thought and feeling.



I have to thank Mr. Hubert Hall and Mr. A. E. Stamp of the Record Office for most valuable advice and suggestions. Mr. G. G. Russell of King's College, Cambridge, kindly read through a part of the proofs and assisted me with some criticism, whilst I am indebted to my brother—Mr. E. W. P. Temperley—for similar services. Though to these friendly counsellors and critics is due a large part of any merit the book may be thought to have, it must be understood that under no circumstances are they to be held responsible for any blunders or mis-statements which it ~~may~~ contain.

does

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NOTE ON THE USE OF THE WORDS *Liberal* and *Liberalism*.

They are used in three senses in this work.

- (1) They generally indicate the party of men throughout Europe whose demands were for national independence and representative government.
- (2) They sometimes indicate the progressive and enlightened domestic policy of Pitt, Canning and Huskisson.
- (3) They are sometimes used to distinguish the moderate Whigs led by Earl Grey.

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ABBREVIATIONS IN REFERENCE TO ORIGINAL SOURCES.

Thus Spain—F.O. 299—indicates volume 299 of the drafts and despatches to and from Spain deposited by the Foreign Office at the Record Office.

B.M. and Ad. MSS. indicate the British Museum and the Additional Manuscripts there preserved.

## CHAPTER I

### BOYHOOD AND EDUCATION

ON April 11, 1770, the wife of a certain poor barrister of the Temple gave birth to a child so destined by circumstance and origin to obscurity, that in future several London parishes were to dispute the honour of having been his birthplace. This boy was George Canning, and the year of his birth the first of that ministry, so memorable alike for its tyranny towards America, its servility to the King, and the indescribable shame and humiliation associated with the premiership of North. At this crisis was born the statesman who was to inspire England's policy with some of the idealism and to restore to her the proud position, which she had won under the Great Commoner; and was now so soon to lose by the measures of his unworthy successors. Nor was the loss of fame and Empire less imminent to the country, than were poverty and distress to the family in which the youthful Canning was nurtured. In after days he wittily described himself as "an Irishman born in London," and his father, generous improvident and careless, was as typical an Irishman as ever lived. The imaginative zeal of biographers has traced his pedigree up to the days of Edward II. and credited our hero with ancestors in the shape of a Lord Mayor of London, several Members of Parliament and three Mayors of Bristol. Chatterton, that youngest and most unfortunate of poets, professed to have extracted the Rowley manuscripts from a chest in St. Mary's Church at Bristol belonging to Mr. Canynge, who is accordingly mentioned in these most famous of literary forgeries. But the main seat of the family was at Foxcote in Warwickshire, and while municipal honours were thus sought by some members of the family another branch had transferred itself to Ireland. George Canning the first was one of the English settlers in the Plantation of Ulster, and was granted the Manor of Garvagh in Londonderry. A son

of his perished in the terrible Irish rising of 1641, a grandson was attainted by King James in the Irish Parliament of 1690, and by a strange irony their famous descendant was a passionate champion of Roman Catholic Emancipation.

The father of the statesman, George Canning the fourth, was the eldest son of Stratford Canning of Garvagh. Stratford seems to have been of a type common to the life of that day and the stage of this, a parent invincible in his prejudices and intolerant of independence in his children. George fell in love with a young lady whom his father disliked and of whom history has no more to relate. He added to his offence by professing an ardent attachment to civil and religious liberty, and his father, thus doubly outraged, disinherited him and sent him to seek his fortune elsewhere with an allowance of a hundred and fifty pounds a year. Drifting to London in 1758, he was called to the Bar at the Middle Temple, became a frequenter of Grub Street, a friend of Churchill, Colman and Whitbread, and a contributor of bad verses to Dodsley's *Miscellanies*. He engaged in a scurrilous literary duel with Smollett the novelist, and attracted some notice by his violent support of Wilkes, that most audacious of demagogues and professional of patriots, just now at the height of his fame and misfortunes. He abused the Ministry for their taxation of America, declaimed against the tyranny of priests and kings, and boasted of his ancestors, "who fought, who bled, and (let me add) who died," for the cause of "pale liberty, when Popery high her bloody standard bore." It is perhaps hardly surprising that his pen yielded him no income, whilst his opinions were sufficient to preclude his success at the Bar. In return for a discharge of his many bills he therefore consented to break the entail of his estate, which his unrelenting father at once settled on his younger brother. Improvident as ever, he was soon again in debt, and in 1768 added alike to his distress and his happiness by marrying a beautiful and penniless girl of eighteen. As a last resource he set up as a wine-merchant, but again failed and sank into the grave, worn out by care and disappointment, just a year after the birth of his son. He seems to have been a man of generous nature, and in his married life to have been singularly happy despite all his misfortunes. His father, who had not forgiven his first attachment and been still more enraged at his second, now exercised a refinement of cruelty, and not only refused to restore the patrimony to his grandson, but withdrew the miserable pittance of £150 a year from the widow and orphan.



But Mrs. Canning was as full of resource and courage as she was destitute of means. With the view of going upon the stage she secured an introduction to Garrick, who favoured her request. She appeared at Drury Lane and Covent Garden, taking the chief parts in "Jane Shore" and "Perdita and Florizel," the latter being the "Winter's Tale" transformed into a farce and adapted to eighteenth century tastes. But as the chivalry of the spectators, stimulated at first by her youth beauty and sad history, cooled into criticism Mrs. Canning took inferior parts; and finally appeared on the foreground of stages less famous than those of London, at Bristol, Plymouth and Hull. At some time between 1774-9 she married Mr. Reddish, an actor-manager, famous for his representation of the stage villain, a part to which his private character lent an unnatural realism. The movements of his wife and the young George Canning during the next few years are impossible to trace, for though there is no doubt that she was actually married to Reddish his name was borne by three or four persons at Bristol and elsewhere. Remarking on this, Hannah More, whose piety should have saved her from so execrable a pun, said, "there was a whole bundle of reddishes." Eventually we cannot be surprised that this profligate, who was as lavish with his money as his name, drank himself into imbecility and ended his days at York Asylum in 1785. His wife was plunged in deep poverty and therefore resumed her professional career till she married a third husband in the shape of Mr. Hunn, a silk-mercator of Plymouth. On business failing he borrowed an idea from his wife and ventured to appear on the stage. We are told that Reddish had often been pelted and hissed on account of his personal character at the beginning of a piece, and applauded at its close for his rendering of the part he had assumed. But poor Mr. Hunn was abused, not for his own excellent character, but for that which he represented from the start to the finish of all pieces in which he appeared. His death left his unfortunate wife with two daughters and a son, to support whom she continued for some time on the stage, but eventually settled down in retirement near Bath. These somewhat obscure details are needful both to understand and to refute the malignant personal slanders which appeared in the press at a later date, and which often declared Canning himself to be illegitimate, and invariably proclaimed his mother to be of low birth. In point of fact her pedigree extended to the conquest and included not only early Irish Kings but, what is of more importance, many later

Irish peers. Moreover in all her sorrows and vicissitudes it had been acknowledged that she was a woman of spotless virtue, strong character, and mental energy, though her theatrical talent was small. It has seldom indeed been recorded in history that the mothers of great men have not been possessed of qualities sufficient to explain, if not to justify, the abnormal talents of their sons.

The truest witness to her worth is to be found in the deep affection which she inspired in her son, and the history of his devotion to her is the most beautiful and touching episode of his life. Throughout his career, despite all official or parliamentary cares, he wrote to her once a week with unvarying regularity. He often visited her when she was acting and always showed to her the utmost consideration and tenderness. When in the height of his fame, as Foreign Secretary in 1807, he visited her at Winchester, where she had some relations of somewhat humble birth. Towards these Canning behaved with the utmost delicacy and cordiality, showing himself in their company in public places and frankly delighting in their society. In his earlier years he shared with her his small income, and\* later provided for her out of his increased means. She lived to see him popular and acclaimed on all sides as the first statesman of the age, dying at the age of eighty in the same year as her son.

The influence of the hand-to-mouth Bohemian existence of a strolling player so dissolute as Reddish must have been harmful to any boy, and perhaps we may trace to this cause some of the irritability and sensitiveness of Canning's later years. "Of my education," wrote Canning with mingled humour and pathos, "the first circumstance of which I have any recollection are, that I was, at the age of six years employed in learning the rudiments of my mother tongue, spinning cockchafers on corking pins and longing for bread and butter." But the gloom of his prospects was even then equalled by the precocity of his talents, and Moody the actor, a man of kindly disposition, discerned and lamented both. The boy was in his opinion "on the road to the gallows," if he remained much longer exposed to the evil influences and associations of Reddish. Stratford Canning, a younger brother of George Canning the fourth, long settled in the city as a wealthy merchant, had as yet done nothing for the widow

\* The story of his settling a pension on her is a fable, or at least is unconfirmed by the pension list. This did not, however, prevent Peter Pindar from writing libellous verses on the subject.



or son of his brother. Moody interviewed him and made strong representations, wrote to other relations, and finally induced Stratford to take sole charge of the boy (1778). The implacable old grandfather was at length induced, apparently by the entreaties of his wife, to grant, as a small annuity for the maintenance of the boy, the proceeds from the estate of Kilmainham in Kilkenny which were about £200 a year. Thus separated from his parent and from Reddish the boy carried away with him an intense love of acting and a life-long affection for his mother. But far from justifying the gloomy prediction of Moody he soon showed that he was much more likely to encounter the early death so invariably predicted in story books for the model boy.

His first school was at Hyde Abbey and his first master Dr. Richards, whom he afterwards rewarded with a prebend's stall in the neighbouring Cathedral of Winchester. Many years after this date one of this worthy man's scholars wrote from India, "I am amongst savages it is true, but none so savage as old Richards." But this rod-loving pedagogue was mild and tame to Canning, who even at this early age won fame for his graceful verses. In a humorous fragment of autobiography Canning writes as follows:—"I set out with becoming a professed admirer and would-be imitator of the heroes of the head class, and wearied the good-natured patience of all my friends, relations, intimate acquaintances and visitors during the first six vacations by relating ten times a day with a considerable degree of archness and an infinite quantity of admiration, the tricks of Tomlinson and the wickedness of Wilkins, and how Spriggins kicked the usher's shins under the table and then said it was not he." His holidays he spent with friends or at the house of his uncle where he met Sheridan and Fox, the latter of whom persuaded Stratford to send the boy to Eton. We possess a portrait by Gainsborough of Canning about this date (1782). It represents a very handsome boy in a Vandyck collar and costume, with his black hair flowing over his shoulders, full lips and large dark melting eyes set in an oval face. His expression is for a child full of gravity and much resembles that of his portraits when a young man, in its somewhat wistful melancholy.

Eton along with other schools of that time suffered from a system limited in range, academic in nature, and enforced in a manner more remarkable for age than wisdom. The leading principle of education was the superiority of form to



matter, truth in an inelegant form was anathema. Study was often directed not towards the best expression of the best thoughts, but towards the best expression of thoughts often in themselves commonplace. The sense often echoed to the sound, and exquisite finish disguised the frailty of the substance. Frere tells us that when on a country walk with Canning in later years he found that the statesman who could sway the policy of a nation was unaware that the tadpole became a frog. This particular crumb of knowledge may not be essential for the nutriment of a youthful statesman, but in those days the truths of science and mathematics and to a less extent those of politics, ethics, and philosophy, were certainly slighted because incapable of finished or poetic expression. Wellington left Eton to learn a scientific military education at a French school, and Canning was instructed in social and economic truths by Dean Jackson and Pitt, when his school-days had long been ended. Windham was the true type of man produced by the system, an orator of exquisite taste and delicacy, who revelled in classical quotation and allusion and eschewed statistics and false quantities. At Eton, within his strictly limited range, Canning studied hard, became a finished classical scholar, and carried off many prizes. Showing as always great precocity he displayed a middle-aged dislike for boyish amusements. "C. knew Canning well at Eton," notes Wilberforce\* in his diary, "he never played at games with the other boys; quite a man, fond of acting, decent and moral." From other sources we learn that he was always consulted by the other boys in their difficulties, and his advice received with the same reverence as if it had proceeded from Ahitophel or the Sibyl of Cumae.

In these days Cabinet ministers can be drawn from almost any rank in society, Peel was the son of a cotton-spinner and Cobden had himself been a bagman. But at the time of which we speak the coincidence of extensive acres with moderate abilities and a historic name almost mechanically entitled a peer to the highest positions. The second-hand furniture of eighteenth century Cabinets consisted always in patricians, whose social influence was so great that their political talents could safely be neglected. Of the first of these statements Rockingham, Grafton and Portland are examples, whilst for the second such men as Earl Gower, the Duke of Bedford, Lord John Cavendish and Carmarthen may serve. These circumstances invested the mimic debates with

\* Wilberforce—Life. V. 139.

an interest more than academic, for it could be predicted with certainty that at any given time Eton would have some future statesman within its walls. Here the youthful orator could trim his plumes, polish his periods, and indicate his future political attitude by crossing swords with his future antagonists. The debating society was a mimic parliament with grave and learned speaker, due registration of votes, ministerial and opposition benches. Here Canning early distinguished himself in company with the future Earl Grey and Hookham Frere. Of their sentiments indeed at this time we know nothing, but Canning was "a horrible Whig" who thundered against Pitt with all the energy of young eloquence.

But these youthful men of the world were not content with their political labours. They aspired to be social satirists of their miniature globe, and to be the Addison and the Swift of the Eton of the day. The journal which they issued for the purpose was known as the "*Microcosm*," appearing weekly from the 1st November, 1788, till the 30th July in the following year. J. Smith was the editor, and the contributors numbered among them Bobus Smith, Charles Ellis, Hookham Frere and our hero. Canning contributed far the largest share of articles to the journal, which excited such considerable attention that an enterprising bookseller purchased the copyright for fifty pounds and subsequently sold five successive editions, the last appearing in 1825. "*The Microcosm*," is perhaps hardly as good a production as the "*Etonian*," when it was edited by Praed and Moultrie but it is in some ways more remarkable. The authors went farther afield than the *Etonian* modes of life they at first intended to satirise, and criticized in mock Addisonian style the habits of the world at large, with the gravity of men and the knowledge of babes.

Already the combination of subtle humour with boisterous fun, for which Canning was famous, may be discerned in this journal. He also contributed poems, of which one on the slavery of Greece breathes something more than mere scholarly sympathy. There are several parodies, a classical commentary and criticism on the nursery ballad of the knave of hearts, and some clever essays. Of these perhaps the best is the "*Analogy of the Arts of Weaving and Poetry*," where a distressed weaver implores poets to "boldly extirpate from their writings every species of foreign manufacture; and adopt in their stead, materials from the prolific looms of their



countrymen. . . . Will any caviller presume to contend that our looms are not as fertile of poetical imagery as those of our neighbours? Have we not handkerchiefs of printed cotton, crowded with all the beauties of rural scenery and 'azure flowers that blow,' in the carpets of the Wilton manufactory?" We can already see something of the sarcasm and wit of his later days, whilst some of his essays display a Ciceronian polish and finished expression and a precocity of judgment truly marvellous in a boy of sixteen.

His writings added to his fame as a scholar and debater. When Fanny Burney came down to Eton in the train of royalty in 1787 to hear the speeches, Canning and J. Smith were the principal orators and were pointed out as the editors of the "Microcosm." During his last years at Eton, Canning, by reason of his looks and his talents, was the show boy of the place and the magnet of visitors at Montem. He formed some lasting friendships at school, notably with Hookham Frere and Charles Ellis (afterwards Lord Seaforth) and Bobus Smith. The latter is famous as the brother of Sidney Smith, and the protagonist in a bout of fisticuffs at Eton with no less an opponent than the future Iron Duke. Canning always retained his love for Eton which perhaps influenced his belief in the excellence of the educational system of that time. It was there at the Montem of 1823 that he met Brougham, for the first time after a memorable exchange of savage personalities in the Commons, and that to the infinite delight of the spectators he warmly grasped him by the hand. In the following year he sat in the ten-oar, in the place reserved for the most illustrious visitor, cheering louder than any of the boys as the boats rushed past. The memory of his kindness and condescension during his visits remained with a small Etonian whose verses the great man had praised, all unconscious that in the distant future the name of Gladstone would rival his own in fame and popularity. "From her," Canning says of Eton in a valedictory passage in the "Microcosm" which might have come from some sentimental greybeard, "to have sucked the milk of Science, to have contracted for her a pious fondness and veneration which will bind me for ever to her interests; and (pardon kind reader the licensed vanity of a periodical writer abandoning himself on his deathbed to the fascination of egotism) perhaps to have improved by my earnest endeavours her younger part of the present generation, is to me a source of infinite pride and satisfaction."



Leaving Eton in 1788, Canning proceeded to Oxford, where a fresh harvest of triumphs awaited his sickle. Newton tells us that he was as studious as ever, being seldom without a book or pen in his hand, whilst he never rode or even hired horses. Celebrated as always for his Latinity he won additional fame at Oxford and carried off the Chancellor's Medal for his verses on the "Iter ad Meccam," which were said to form the best prize-poem ever written.

If Modern thought has somewhat altered in its opinions as to what knowledge is of most worth, it has revolutionised the old views of the relations between teacher and pupil. In those days there was an impassable barrier between Fellows and Undergraduates. The former never appeared in College without full wig, cap and gown, and occupied themselves in tyrannising over the Undergraduates in a thousand petty ways. For the most part they spent the time they could spare from the bottle, the coffee house and the hunting field in yawning over their books or in Chapel, and in delivering lectures somewhat tedious and pompous to pupils whose attendance was rigidly enforced. To this type of Mentor there were indeed some honourable exceptions and of these was the Dean of Christ Church, Cyril Jackson, a man of ripe scholarship, cultivated tastes and kindly heart. Nor was his wisdom confined to classics, for in knowledge of the social and economic condition of England he stood second only to Arthur Young. He introduced the then unheard-of innovation of entertaining undergraduates daily, of endeavouring to make of them friends and companions, and of studying the aims, inclinations, ambitions and character of all of them. A single instance will suffice to prove his great influence on Canning. A mysterious and secret debating society had been formed by Canning and some half dozen friends, among them the future Lord Liverpool. They sometimes appeared in Hall in their club blazer, which consisted of a coat of an uncommon shade of brown, with velvet cuffs and collars, and buttons which bore as a mystic device the initials of Demosthenes, Pitt, Cicero and Fox. This uniform seems to have made the same impression on other undergraduates as Mr. Jingle in his Pickwick Club Coat did upon the dancers of Rochester. But the secret of their object and purposes leaked out and Canning, who at this time seems to have had serious designs on the wool-sack, was warned by the Dean that his continuance in the Club might injure his legal prospects, as he would

be thought to have parliamentary ambitions. He agreed and resigned to the dismay of the Society, which forthwith proceeded to move some violent resolutions. "I was summoned to the bar, and of course refused to obey the summons," writes Canning to Newton. "A deputation was then sent to interrogate me respecting the causes of my resignation which of course I refused to reveal; and they were at last satisfied by my declaring that the reason of my resignation did not affect them collectively or individually." But his defection did so far influence them as to damp their parliamentary ardour and do away with their gorgeous uniform. The debates indeed were renewed "but with less pomp, regularity, numbers and vociferation."

This episode shows, as we have other reasons for believing, that his friends on the whole were few, though distinguished both in rank and intellect. They were Jenkinson, afterwards his premier, Lord Morley afterwards Lord Boringdon and his constant correspondent, Lord Holland the nephew of Fox, Lord Carlisle, Newton and Sturges Bourne. He speaks slightly of the "utter emptiness and vanity of the generality of good folks Christ Church can boast." But he was happy in his little circle, and the rest of his time was spent in his books and his studies. Such application was unusual, and as praiseworthy as needless, because a degree in those days was easy of attainment to the point of farce. In 1791, Canning was made Bachelor of Arts, bade farewell to Alma Mater, and set out to London to make a name for himself at the Bar, with his mind well stored with academic knowledge and his head full of dreams, hopes and ambitions.

## CHAPTER II

### THE BEGINNING OF A GREAT PARLIAMENTARY CAREER

DURING the time he could spare from his books the young law-student found himself able to enter at once into a society as brilliant and interesting as any that ever existed. The uniform dulness of Court life under George the Third had estranged and chilled more people than his sons, and few nobles ever appeared at the royal levées unless they held or were seeking places. In those days the world of politics was small, and social influence, ties of personal friendship and intimacy supplied the place of the wire-puller, the Caucus and the Whip. On the Tory side the leaders of rank and fashion were the Duchess of Gordon and Lady Salisbury, who gave balls, routs and receptions to the supporters of the Government in order to out-shine the attractions of Devonshire and Carlton House. The Prince of Wales had openly declared his sympathy with the Whigs, giving banquets and dances in the most lavish and splendid style, and subscribing to the toasts of "Liberty of the People" and "Reform of Parliament." His handsome appearance, his genial good-nature and liberality won admiration everywhere, and he as yet showed little of the vanity, indulgence and weakness of his later years. At Devonshire House the Whigs could fairly boast that they assembled the largest share of the wisdom, wit and beauty of England. "Sir," said Dr. Johnson one day to the obsequious Bozzy, "Sir, we are now before the French in literature. We had it long after them in England. Any man who wears a powdered wig and sword is now ashamed to be illiterate." Of Devonshire House it could certainly be said that in brilliancy of wit, literary polish and political importance its gatherings surpassed even the most famous of the salons of Paris. The Duchess herself was well qualified to preside over such a gathering, and her beauty personal charm



and ability had often proved resistless in politics. She had secured the triumph of Fox in the Westminster election in the teeth of the Government, who had vainly sought to check her influence by secret bribes to the electors and by open parliamentary opposition. More important still, she had secured to the Whig cause a young recruit of great ability, none other than the famous Mr. Grey, who was to lead the Whig cause for many years amid the gloom of opposition, and to become at last the premier who carried the Reform Bill. There too was often to be seen the famous Mrs. Crewe, inseparably associated with the Whig toast of the "Buff and the Blue," whom Canning had styled "his tut'ress" in some verses he had addressed to her. Fanny Burney remarked of Mrs. Sheridan, the 'Saint Cecilia' of the canvas of Reynolds, that the "elegance of her beauty is unequalled by any I ever saw except Mrs. Crewe, who uglifies everything near her." Of those who came to listen to the beautiful voice of Mrs. Sheridan, to exchange repartees and glances with Mrs. Crewe, or to talk of party prospects with the Duchess, it must suffice to recall the names. The Crown Prince might be seen fraternizing with Charles Fox and his friend Colonel Fitzpatrick, whilst Erskine wearied even 'good-natured Devon' with legends of his enormous practice and popularity at the Bar. There too was sometimes to be found the melancholy and disappointed Marquis of Lansdowne, the Jesuit of English politics, whose abilities had been equalled and frustrated by his duplicity. With him came his friend the famous Radical Bentham, to whom he prophesied that young Canning would one day be Prime Minister, as he noted his wit and brilliancy, already conspicuous even in that assembly. There also was to be seen Earl Stanhope, who had redeemed himself "from that leprous stain nobility" by erasing his crest from his plate and his carriages and assuming the title of citizen; a feat only comparable to that of the two French republican aristocrats, who refused to play piquet because of the presence of kings and queens in the pack. Such personages and such actions make it easier to explain the desertion of Portland, Burke and Windham. Yet though their classic learning and taste were now but seldom to be displayed at Devonshire House, there still remained a great school in which young Canning may have learnt some of the wit for which he was afterwards so renowned. Selwyn was there cracking his coarse jests, Gibbon tapping his snuff-box and displaying a subtler irony, Hare with his boisterous humour, Curran with

his racy anecdotes, and wittier and more brilliant than all, the incomparable Sheridan himself.

Of all the brilliant circle we have just described, Sheridan from a certain superficial similarity of character and from his close intimacy, had the greatest influence upon Canning. Nature had endowed Sheridan with such transcendent gifts that contemporaries forgave and posterity has forgotten his excesses and errors. Before he was thirty his plays were acknowledged as the classics of the comedy of manners. Before he was forty he had delivered a speech which is still the most famous and, in the opinion of all who heard it, the finest ever uttered in the English language. In real life his powers of wit and repartee were equal to those of his own characters, and despite his origin his social was equal to his parliamentary success. Such triumphs would have ruined a nobler character than that of Sheridan, which needed adversity to reveal its finer qualities at the gloomy and tragic close of his career. Like some incomprehensible character of romance he was both base and generous, unstable and chivalrous, vain and lovable. We read with pain of his secret visits to Chauvelin when England and France were on the brink of war in 1793, of his many intrigues with the Crown Prince against one colleague or another, of his deliberate and successful attempt to sever the long and well tried friendship of Burke and Fox. Mr. Creevey, the lately discovered Pepys of the Regency era, tells how Lady Elizabeth Forster counselled him, "to drink less and to speak the truth." The justification of this brutal advice may be found in Russell's portrait, and none who have studied his likeness or career can doubt that he was fatally wanting in principle, balance and sincerity. Burke, and finally Fox, became estranged from him, not primarily because of a difference of view, but because of a difference of conviction and earnestness. There is a well known story, that Sheridan paid Canning's expenses at Eton, but it is refuted by direct evidence to the contrary. Even without this we might be sure that "poor Sherry's" poverty but not his will refused. On one occasion indeed he stuffed his windows with bank-notes to prevent them from rattling, but he was usually unable even to pay the twopenny postman for his letters. That official seems to have been the only person whom he could not persuade to give him credit, for he cajoled both his creditors and even his attorney. "There has been nothing like it since the days of Orpheus," says Byron. "He told me he never had a shilling of his own. To be sure he con-



trived to extract a good many from other people," of whom Canning was one. In his later years Sheridan sent a bond for £200 and a request for a loan to Canning, who at once sent the cheque but threw the bond in the fire.

With his sinister attractiveness and reckless brilliancy Sheridan was the true type of the Man and the Society in which Canning's youth was passed.

"Poor fellow," said Wilberforce of Canning, "he had no father or mother to train him up. He was brought up I believe partly with Sheridan. I always wondered he was so pure." But the boy had a sturdy character, which enabled him to admire the abilities, imitate the wit, and yet to despise the weakness of men of the extraordinary personal charm of Sheridan and Fox. He had indeed nothing of the temperament of the gambler or the drinker. Both in life and in politics he always showed independence, clear practical insight, and balanced judgment. "Tell me,"\* he writes on Oct. 15, 1792, "that any person thinks so and so about morals or about politics or any other subject, if there be any other equally open to the consideration of all men and for which no technical skill or particular habit is necessary. . . . I should no more think of conforming to that of which I did not approve, because of the authority by which it was supported, than I should think of calling black white or white black, in contradiction to my senses and in compliance to the fancy of another. . . . So long as God continues to me the power of comparing, selecting and judging between facts and opinions, it shall be my earnest endeavour to do so with as little prejudice and partiality as possible, and that whatever faults and errors I may commit I will at least have the satisfaction of charging them upon my own responsibility, and will not have it said to me, not justly said to me at least—'This you did on such a one's opinion; thus you were the tool of that man, here you were the echo of t'other.'"

Within a few months from this date he was a firm ally of Pitt and within a year a Tory member of Parliament, and what is more extraordinary his change of front resulted from the principles laid down in this letter. At Oxford the ardour of Canning's Whiggism had increased, and at the London debating clubs of "The Hardwicke" and "The Crown and Anchor" he had won great fame for his unusual combination of passionate eloquence and close argument. A fragment of

\* Quoted from a letter in the possession of Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, from *Recollections of George Canning*, XIXth Century, Jan. 1880.



his youthful eloquence at one of these meetings has been preserved, and is interesting as shewing how early he suspected the French Revolutionists. "To the steady eye of a sagacious criticism the eloquence of Mirabeau will appear to be as empty and vapid as his patriotism. It is like the beverage, Sir," (addressing the President who was solacing himself with a pot of porter) "which stands so invitingly before you—foam and froth at the top, heavy and muddy within." While Canning was declaiming at clubs, his Oxford friend young Jenkinson had just entered Parliament, and made his opening speech as the Tory Side, with great applause. Sheridan had openly boasted that the Whigs would provide an antidote in the person of young Canning. He was therefore pursued in his revolt by a swarm of taunts and sarcasms from the Whigs, who pointed to his poverty and dependence as the proof of their innuendoes. That he felt his action needed explanation is clear, and for the purpose he sought\* an interview with Sheridan. We hear on good authority that he adduced Sheridan himself as an instance of the chill exclusiveness of the Whig chiefs towards men of genius. Confidence was a plant which grew hardly in that stony aristocratic soil. In a Whig Ministry the lions of debate, with the single exception of Fox, always yielded place to the jackals of position and wealth. The good-natured Sheridan is characteristically said to have told Canning to snatch at his opportunity, and to accept a seat if Pitt offered it. But there are not wanting proofs that conviction more than calculation occasioned a change of view, which was neither so sudden nor complete as is imagined.

Precocious talent may have had more chance of shining in ministerial ranks, but in 1792 the position of the Government was extremely insecure. Thurlow and the Duke of Leeds had left the Ministry and were working with the Opposition, Burke and Portland had not yet definitely gone over to the Tories. When Canning made his choice, which was at least as early as the beginning of 1792, Pitt and Grenville felt so weak that they were actually negotiating for a Coalition with Fox and the more violent Whigs. While at Oxford† the

\*Our only two good authorities on this subject are Lord Stratford de Redcliffe as *supra* and Lord Dalling.—*Historical Characters*.

† This fact has been doubted, but Lord Stratford de Redcliffe was nearly certain of it, and Hookham Frere's testimony, which has escaped the sceptics, is unassailable. Canning showed him the letter containing the offer when he visited him at Oxford.

v. Works of Hookham Frere. *Memoir of his Life*. p. xxvi.

Duke of Portland offered Canning a pocket borough, which he refused. To have accepted it would have implied a judicious hesitancy, and in fact prepared the way for a transition to Toryism, a tendency which Canning had already foreseen. To reject without hesitation a middle course, which no one could have blamed him for taking, implies independence rather than servility, repentance more than apostasy. He said to Frere at this time "I think there must be a split. The Duke will go over to Pitt, and I will go over in no man's train. If I join Pitt, I will go by myself." Yet Pitt thought a\* coalition inevitable at this very moment, which was therefore not a favourable one in which to flout both the Portland and the Foxite Whigs. Lord Holland, who was present at the interview with Sheridan, defended Canning's action at all times and on all occasions against the resentment of his fellow Whigs. Canning's words on a similar occasion show both his fidelity to his convictions and his ardent desire for independence. "How then am I to arrive at the objects of my ambition?" writes he to Lord Boringdon on Oct. 29, 1801. . . . "I must act as I think right. My road must be through character to power; that I may take this road and miss the end is very possible; nay, that by acting as I think right, I may not, as surely as I expect it, get even to my second stage—character—it is very possible also, but *that I cannot help*." The Whig satirists were undoubtedly of a different opinion.

Romance and imagination are sometimes the friends and interpreters of History, but they appear as traitors in a picturesque incident related by Sir Walter Scott of Canning at this time. While Canning was studying at the Temple, he was approached by the famous Godwin and offered the leadership of the English Revolutionary movement towards Communism and Fraternity. Canning hesitated and at length rejected the offer, and shocked by the violence of Godwin and his friends flung himself into the arms of Pitt. This story is said to have come from Sir William Knighton, though it is unaccountably absent from his memoirs and his testimony would in any case be most dubious. Godwin himself was of

\* For these attempted coalitions v. Pol. Mem. Duke of Leeds. Edition O. Browning pp. 201-2, and Fitzmaurice's *Shelburne* from which we learn that the king seriously thought of dismissing Pitt in 1792.

As late as Jan., 1793, the negotiations between Pitt and Fox were still in the balance, and Portland's attitude still undecided. v. Lord Sheffield to Gibbon. Corresp. ed. R. E. Prothero II. 351, 63.



small celebrity till his *Political Justice* was published in 1793, and was unlikely to seek a (\*) mere boy for the conduct of so great an enterprise when such men as Tom Paine, Horne Tooke and Earl Stanhope were at hand. Pitt the old order and Godwin the new are represented as contending for the person of Canning, like Squire Beltham and Richmond Roy for the possession of Harry Richmond. This is the contemporary view embodied in the story, which has no real claims to authenticity. We are told that Dumas once produced a historical work describing the Flight to Varennes, and on asking his friends for their opinion was informed that he had added one more to his long list of fascinating romances. The same may be said of Sir Walter Scott and this legend of Canning which he relates with all the convincing realism of fiction.

On the whole the conduct of Canning on this occasion seems more worthy of praise than blame, which cannot be said of it at some other critical turning-points of his life. Whig doctrines of an extreme type had been instilled into him by the memory and the writings of his father, by his up-bringing and by his associates. These generous extravagances remained with him for a time whilst he read for the Bar, and until at the suggestion of Burke he seriously began to consider the political situation in view of a parliamentary career. If ever there was a time when preconceived ideas were overthrown, it was as we shall show, at that stage in the French Revolution which was reached in 1792. Though Canning's views had changed as early as the middle of 1792 we know from a letter of Dec. 13, that he still had no thought of a parliamentary career. He could have hardly emancipated himself from the creed of his faith at an earlier age than that of twenty-two, whilst to the last some of his ideas remained distinctly Whig. But he was no believer in half measures and being on the whole less Whig than Tory, sided with Pitt, cut himself adrift from the Portland Whigs and even subsequently protested against their inclusion in the ministry. It has been said that he sought an interview

\* The epigram of Colonel Fitzpatrick on his desertion of the Whigs is alone sufficient disproof:—

“The turning of coats so common is grown  
That no one would wish to attack it,  
But no case until now was so flagrantly known  
Of a schoolboy turning his jacket.”

Godwin however certainly knew Canning at this time.—Macvey Napier *Sel. Correspondence*, p. 104.



with Pitt on his own initiative and without previous acquaintance, but we now know that Hookham Frere was the cause of their first meeting. So narrow was the world in those days that Pitt had already heard of his fame as a debating club orator, and expressed a desire to secure his services for the Tory party. "With his humour and fancy it was impossible to resist him," says Frere, and he soon became one of the few admitted into intimacy with the most austere and Olympian of British statesmen.

The period at which Canning entered the House of Commons was the golden time of English oratory. A later and more commercial age has neither time nor space for eloquence, and the tongue of a Fox would not now cajole a single member to vote against the command of his whip and his caucus. The man of business clamours for facts and statistics, not classical quotations nor rolling Ciceronian periods, nor even those lofty appeals to the conscience and the passions which mark the great utterance of that earlier day. Such demands are fatal to an eloquence which depended so much on the leisure, the taste and the appreciation of a highly cultured class. To turn back from the speech of our own day to eighteenth century oratory, is like passing from a factory, with its whirling engines, busy tired workers and confined close atmosphere, to some old world garden with its trim well-clipt hedges, its calm marble statues and wide stately lawns. The fame of English eloquence was then such that foreign visitors flocked to the "British Senate" as to the Opera. No more brilliant and accomplished body of orators ever sat within the walls of the Commons than in 1793. Of these the greatest in the eyes of that posterity, to whom he so often appealed, is undoubtedly Burke, though the less discriminating wits of his own day nicknamed him the "Dinner Bell." His speeches as we read them to-day show a philosophic insight and grasp of politics almost unequalled in history, united to a burning and passionate eloquence. But they were often too diffuse and profound for a place of debate, the wit was somewhat ponderous, the fancy over-gorgeous and extravagant, and the meaning obscure from the exceeding internal lustre of the mind. To these speeches, whose visions were of the future and whose principles were of all time, there could be no greater contrast than the utterances of Fox, so admirably adapted for the occasion, so full of temporary interest and the passion of the moment. Burke declared him to be the "most brilliant and accomplished debater the world

has ever seen," and to this colossal destructive power he added a universal sympathy and glorious humanity, which but for his violence would have made the causes he advocated, irresistible. Marvellous indeed must have been the powers which made his audience forget not only his extravagances of opinion, his excessive repetitions and somewhat turgid rhetoric, but his uncouth gestures, coarse features, and harsh unpleasing voice. Sheridan, the other great orator of opposition, had little indeed of the fiery passion of Fox. With a more famous single speech to his credit than any other English orator, his usual efforts were over-loaded with ornament and gaudy rhetoric. In carefully polished wit and effective repartee he was perhaps never equalled, unless by Canning himself, and Pitt often suffered under the lash of his sarcasm. But sincerity is above all a necessity for the orator, and his speeches were often perilously like those of Tartuffe or his own Joseph Surface. The ministerialists remarked with some truth of the three Whig orators, that Burke said in debate what no one else ever said, Sheridan what no one ought to say, and Fox what no one else would dare to say. Of other orators there were Windham and Whitbread, Erskine and Tierney and Grey, all remarkable for a stately and classical type of eloquence, and men who in an age of less brilliancy would not have secured the neglect of posterity.

Even without Windham and Burke the opposition had still an astounding array of talent. That it was less formidable than appeared is probable, for the presence of several men of genius is less likely to be a link than a dissolvent of party union. But on the side of the Government the genius of Pitt was uncontested by the pretensions of a rival in the Commons. Accordingly his followers, who were with few exceptions dull mediocrities or royal placemen, blindly followed his direction. The speeches of Dundas, his only effective supporter, were marked by nothing more than business ability and vigorous common sense. A famous anecdote illustrates how completely the burden of attack and defence on the Government side lay upon the shoulders of one man. One day Pitt and Dundas, like Falstaff and Prince Henry rehearsed a little comedy in private life, Pitt playing the part of Fox in an attack and Dundas that of the Government on its defence. That night Fox delivered an assault in much the same style as Pitt had foreseen, and Dundas to his amazement was for once left to reply for the Government. It has been said that one reason for the decay of parliamentary oratory is the necessity for



speaking constantly and at length, without preparation. But Pitt confronted, almost alone, the varied attack of the opposition and poured forth, without premeditation and in an endless stream, sentences which were smooth correct and almost classic in their elegance. They wanted only the vital spark of genius to transmute them into the highest form of literature. Uniform in their monotonous stateliness, his speeches lack the passion of Fox or the imagination of Burke. His vague and shallow generalisations, his lucid expositions of detail contain few phrases of note and only one which has endured, that in the last speech he ever uttered when he bade England, having saved herself by her exertions, save Europe by her example. But the dignity of character and loftiness of aim, which lay beneath his sonorous and spontaneous variations of the commonplace, made him an antagonist with whom none but Fox could grapple with success.

In July, 1793, Canning entered Parliament where two of his old friends had already won for themselves some distinction on the side of the Government. These were Jenkinson, afterwards his Premier, and Mornington whom Hindus still revere as the greatest man who ever ruled in India save Hastings. A picture, painted of the House by Anton Hickel in 1793, represents Pitt speaking and Canning leaning eagerly forward from behind the Treasury Bench, to catch his words. It was not till the 31st January, 1794, that the young orator rose to address the House on the subject of a subsidy to the King of Sardinia. It is interesting to note in his very first speech the clear practical insight which regarded both the partition of Poland and the opposition to France as a question rather of expediency than sentiment. For a maiden speech it is strangely void of eloquence and full of argument. He exhibits considerable talent for debate attacking Fox himself with some effect, but with a sarcasm somewhat elementary and a logic degenerating into sophistry. The speech, though applauded, disappointed most of his friends, but Fanny Burney speaks of it with enthusiasm. Yet its very excellence shows how great must have been his reputation if he was supposed to have fallen short of it in this effort. There are echoes both of Demosthenes and Burke, and Canning was little qualified, from his elegance and precision of style, to copy the latter. 'Apollo imitating Hercules,' sneered the Whigs, and there was much truth in this criticism. The young orator was as yet too academic in thought and manner; he sought to lecture and to legislate for his



audience rather than to cajole or persuade them. But with the insight of genius and the aid of industry and patience, he learnt new lessons, soon catching the tone and the ear of the House with such cleverness, that when he rose to his feet the dismay of the Opposition and the applause of the Government were such as Pitt had until now alone been enabled to awake and to inspire.

## CHAPTER III

### JACOBIN AND ANTI-JACOBIN

THOUGH the slow growth of a plant from seed to flower excites no wonder in the breast of a savage, he is dismayed and horrified by an avalanche. In the man of science both examples of the working of Nature's Laws excite the same enthusiasm or indifference. Even so should the historian strive to regard human history and political events, for towards them the attitude of the eye-witness is often that of the savage. Some revolutions have been unnoticed and disregarded, others are supposed to have broken Heaven's design. No on-looker marvelled at the slow and silent process by which constitutional government developed in England or toleration in Europe. But of the French Revolution no contemporary ever spoke but as the greatest, the most terrible, the most unforeseen event in the world's history. Nor did this result wholly proceed from the shocks which it gave to venerable authority and to the time-worn bases of Society. It was not only that men shuddered to see Kings deposed and privileges overthrown, rivers of blood flowing, and madmen declaring war upon all countries at once. But the fixity and self-sufficiency of the old creeds and ideas of politics and life offered no standards by which to judge the force or the continuance of the new movements. "On a fair review of ancient and modern times," wrote Gibbon, "I can find none that bear any affinity to the present." Men of the older order were stunned and paralysed, seeing nothing but madness and despair in the present, and the sinister triumph of the principles of anarchy and blood in the future. The age of common sense paid the full penalty for its incurable optimism and self-complacency, and found in the French Revolution something colossal, superhuman, incalculable. Yet despite its epic character and imperishable effects it is

probable that this movement has brought less radical changes in modes of thought and life than the religious awakening of the sixteenth century.

By the Reformation the ideals of a world-state and a world-religion were shattered, and toleration and the spirit of rational inquiry became at least a possibility. For a time this critical and inquisitive spirit was occupied in religious controversy; but in the eighteenth century arose a school of philosophers who employed it to attack the political and social systems of the day. Political despotism with the existence of privileged and exclusive classes was a universal feature of the Continent. Religious toleration, where it existed, was due rather to practice than to principle. In most countries there was great misery among the populace due partly to their ignorance but partly also to excessive taxation and bad government. The Reformation had done much to free the mind, but authority was still supreme over the body of Man. Despite the existence of a few benevolent despots like Frederic of Prussia and Joseph of Austria, the philosophers could argue with some show of reason that all the evils of government were due to the tyranny of the altar and the throne. According to Rousseau—Primitive man, whose instincts are to make slaves of his women-folk and to brain his fellow man at sight, had acquired from the untaught grace of life and the untutored impulses of nature the noble soul of a Sidney and the moral grandeur of St. Francis of Assisi. Free him from the fetters of existing ideas and institutions and the reign of universal freedom, peace and love would begin. In France a wealthy and well-educated middle-class accepted these views, in the sense that power and privilege should be transferred from the nobles and the King to themselves. This alone would mark the profound difference between the French and English Revolutions. The English settlement of 1688 was political, it deprived the King of most of his power and placed it in the hands of the Whig nobles. But social swallowed up political changes in the French Revolution, which aimed not only at depriving the King of his power, but at over-turning systems of privilege altogether and establishing social equality. The French Constitution of 1791 left the Crown and the nobles exceedingly weak, and gave the chief power to the bourgeoisie. But the middle-class were now in a position illogical in theory and untenable in fact, for behind them stood the people eager for power and awake with enthusiasm. The Jacobins at once began to stir



up democratic passions, and to proclaim the sovereignty of the people and the need of universal suffrage. The masses were still unsatisfied and were soon to show that they could not be resisted.

That a struggle between these parties in France itself was imminent at the beginning of 1792 cannot therefore be doubted, but the interference of other nations served to deepen its excesses and to increase its savagery. The French emigrant nobles had striven to excite the hostility of Europe towards the Revolution, and Austria and Prussia were in alliance, and not unwilling to profit by what they believed to be the weakness of France. The safety of Louis XVI. was declared by them to be the common cause of all crowned heads. Kaunitz the Austrian Minister openly abused the Jacobins in his despatches. Such an attitude towards her internal affairs was more than any proud nation could endure, and in 1792 war was declared between the two allies and France. Monarchy soon perished and, with the establishment of a militant and victorious republic, France appeared before Europe in a new light. She seemed to be contending with a league of despots, who had attempted to tyrannise over her and inflict upon her humiliations. Her sympathies were universal, her principles aggressive, she posed as the champion of the people against her rulers, of social equality and promotion by merit, of religious and political liberty. She was the sworn foe of feudalism, priestcraft and despotism. The world was to be moulded anew by her influence on the republican principles of virtue, peace and love. "The nations," said Isnard the famous Girondin orator, "will embrace in the presence of dethroned tyrants, of the earth consoled, of heaven satisfied." The French armies were the pilgrims of liberty going forth to free their brethren in all lands from the tyrannies of a thousand years. To the soldier of France war was a crusade, to the statesman politics were a religion, and Reason which they assumed as their sole guide had the colour and the inspiration of Faith. In action as in expression, sublimity was mingled with farce and baseness with heroism, but even at this distance it is hard to look upon the enthusiasms and the dreams of 1792 without emotion.

"Bliss was it in that time to be alive  
But to be young was very Heaven"

wrote Wordsworth, long afterwards, of that time of golden promise and fair illusion.

Like many moderate Whigs and Tories, Canning had sympathised with the progress of the Revolution till 1791, and seen in the adoption of a constitutional form of government of the English type a warrant of stability and hope. Nor did even the establishment of a Republic shake his faith, for non-interference with the internal affairs of other nations was then, as always, his principle. "So long,"\* he writes in a letter to Lord Boringdon, Dec. 13, 1792, "as they were struggling for their own liberty, so long as they were clearing the way for the erection of that Constitution, of which the inhabitants of the country, as if with one soul and one voice, had expressed their choice and demanded the trial, I wished most piously and heartily for the destruction of every impediment. . . . And this from a thorough persuasion that the right of a nation to choose for itself its own constitution, is a right which they claim from God and Nature alone, and for the exercise of which to God and Nature alone they are amenable. . . . I (now) feel that their situation and disposition are extremely changed, and that my sentiments and wishes must, if I have any consistency, change with them. Helpless and insulted, oppressed at home and attacked by a formidable invasion from abroad, struggling with an exertion unparalleled in history, for the acquirement of a blessing of the value of which no nation ever seemed more sensible, and of which perhaps no nation but themselves ever made a bad use the moment they had acquired it; . . . my opinions, my hopes . . . and my prayers went with them; and I exulted in the defeat of their enemies . . . . Now indeed, I find them a very different people, victorious everywhere, but where it most concerned them to look for victory, over their own cursed factions and banditti of assassins and conspirators; not oppressed, attacked, and insulted, but insolent beyond all bounds, professing universal oppression, and proving to demonstration that the best blessing of Heaven, when put into bad hands as liberty into theirs . . . may be converted into a plague for the disquiet and destruction of all mankind; in this character they carry nothing with them of mine, but my contempt and dread and execration."

This letter contains in brief compass the whole case against the French Revolution. For a moment many had pitied

\* Stapleton's *Life and Times, George Canning*, pp. 8-10 Cf., also letter of Dec. 4, 1792, quoted by Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, where he also avows his belief in Catholic Emancipation. These letters incidentally afford the strongest proofs of the sincerity of his change in opinions.



France when attacked by what Victor Hugo calls "that heap of tigers, the Kings." The wild utterances of the Girondists and Jacobins soon began to inspire fear and disgust. But these vague and haughty denunciations might not have roused the peace-loving Pitt. "They might" said Canning, "have been thought a harmless idiot lunacy like that which dressed women in oak leaves and invented new names for the Calendar." But the English were roused by the bloody horrors of the September massacres, by the savage denunciations and the yet more savage energy of the Jacobins, which culminated in the trial and execution of the King. This deed was meant as a defiance to Europe, and combined with the democratic reorganization of Belgium by France to convince the English that she had renounced all obligations to the past, and would set aside at her pleasure the international system of Europe in the future.

Hitherto Pitt's foreign policy had been one of great success; he had been the general pacificator of Europe, and had restored to England much of the authority she had lost since 1783. But though firmness of character may be sufficient for the conduct of a successful foreign policy during peace-time, Pitt's diplomacy at the beginning and in the process of the war was not equal to his fame. A born financier, Pitt looked upon the war with France as a matter of profit and loss; English Stocks were very high, French assignats were worth but a tenth of their face value, and therefore England was sure to conquer. But History mocks the predictions of the ledger and the account book, and Pitt forgot that the energy and spirit of a people and the weakness and disunion of its foes are sometimes of more importance than a veteran army or a swollen Treasury. Nor was 1793 the only year in which he miscalculated the forces against him. He defended the continuance of the war on the ground that it cost France more per month than it did England. A fortnight before Marengo, he told Wilberforce he "could name the week in which it would be impossible for the French to go on, beggared as he knew them to be in their resources." He was also influenced by the passionate desire in England for war, and by a determination to uphold the established system of international rights and duties and defend our allies, the Dutch. But apart from this he thought the war would be short and perhaps not unprofitable. The strong recommendations of Dundas, who pointed to the spoil of French colonies beyond sea, undoubtedly weighed with him. "The war," he told



Wilberforce, "would be over in a twelvemonth," when in fact the accession of England both prolonged and made universal a war, which could now only cease with the total defeat of the French or the complete subjection of the Continent to her principles. The truth is, the French Revolution was beyond the range and understanding of the ablest statesmen of the day, and Pitt no wiser than the rest was at least superior to them in the spirit of cosmopolitan unselfishness with which he carried on the war once undertaken.

One man indeed from the first had foreseen the tendencies and the progress of the Revolution. "Burke's prescient scan pierced through foul Anarchy's gigantic plan, prompt to incredulous hearers to disclose, the guilt of France and Europe's world of woes." Thus wrote Canning in the "New Morality," in verses worthy only of his father. Burke rejoiced in the declaration of war to French principles, and for that very reason predicted its length and bitterness to the incredulous Pitt and Dundas\* the day after war broke out. "We are at war," wrote he, "with a system . . . inimical to all other governments . . . with an armed doctrine. It has by its essence a faction of opinion, of interest, and of enthusiasm in every country. To us it is a colossus which bestrides our Channel . . . Thus advantaged if it can at all exist, it must decisively prevail." Till 1792 his utterances had been regarded as the ravings of distempered genius; he had attracted only the reactionary and the bigoted. Now Canning and the great body of moderates looked upon his foresight as miraculous and his judgment as infallible. "I was convinced," writes Canning, Nov. 28, 1799, of this period, "that our enemies were such as could be reclaimed only by being *crushed*, and our cause one which would finally triumph only if clearly and unequivocally defined." This is a calmer view, but there is something here of the spirit in which Burke urged on his followers to the destruction of "the cannibal philosophers, the banditti, the assassins, and the bloody felons who yet annoy the world." The march of opinion is best illustrated in Gibbon, to whom all religions were equally false, and to whom bigotry and despots were alike abhorrent. Driven in his old age from Lausanne by the Revolution, he found in democracy something crueller than kings and more intolerant than priests. He came to Devonshire House no longer to agree but to dispute with his old friends, to persuade them that the members

\* Harford's Recollections of Wilberforce, pp. 152-3.

of the Convention were devils, and that therefore "democratic principles led by a path of flowers to hell." If the most cynical and indifferent of men could write thus, it is easy to explain the horror and dismay of the English people, to whom the French goddess of liberty appeared as bearing

" In her right a civic wreath,  
In her left a human head."

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*            \*

The first number of the *Anti-Jacobin* was published on November 20, 1797, the last on July 9, 1798. The contributors included George Ellis, a quondam satirist of the Tories in the *Rolliad*, Hookham Frere, Bragge, Hiley Addington, Mornington whilst Gifford, author of the "*Baviad*" and "*Maeviad*" was the editor. The assignment of authorship to the various pieces cannot be made with certainty, as several were confessedly written in collusion, and as each separate number was revised, talked over and sometimes composed in meetings of the whole body of contributors at the house of Lord Malmesbury and the publisher's office. The same precautions to conceal both their meetings and their names were used as were afterwards adopted by Brooks and Lord Malmesbury and Canning in the negotiations of Lisle. Canning was the life and soul of the "*Anti-Jacobin*" as of the "*Microcosm*." It is now certain that but for occasional assistance from Frere, Canning was the sole author of the "*Friend of Humanity and the Knife-grinder*," "*Mrs. Brownrigg the Prentice-cide*," the "*Progress of Man*, parts two and three," and the "*Song of Rogero*." Frere was long supposed to be part author of the "*New Morality*," but in a letter of July 11, 1798, Canning calls himself its author, so that the assistance of Frere could only have been small. The majestic Pitt, who had contributed some prose articles on Finance to the *Anti-Jacobin*, is by tradition supposed to have written some lines in this poem. They contained the much admired simile of the "*Oak and the Stream*." The oak planted by a streamlet's side is loosened in its fibres and finally overthrown by the noiseless action of the current, just as England is undermined by French principles. "You are quite right," wrote Canning to Auckland, "I think, about the Oak and the Stream. Perhaps you may not recollect that the simile is doubly a theft . . . first from some lines in Waller, which Mr. Pitt will be too happy to read or spout to you any day that you may see him, secondly from some very pretty verses of West to Gray." These words seem to indicate Pitt's col-



lusion, though hardly his originality, with regard to the aforementioned simile.

The satire of the *Anti-Jacobin* is directed against French principles, which it defines as a "declaration of the Wrongs of Providence and Rights of Man." The *Jacobin* thinks "All constitutions bad but those bran new"; that the evils of the world are due to government, and priests, and kings are the common enemies and oppressors of all. "To be in this dark abode amongst toads and spiders," says Rogero in "the Rovers," "or in a royal palace amidst the more loathsome reptiles of a Court, would be indifferent to me." "The conscience of a poor man is as valuable to him as that of a prince," says the Landlady in the same play. "It ought to be still more so, in proportion as it is generally more pure," protests the Waiter with cold reproof. But not content with attacking political and religious institutions they assault morals, manners, and human society in general. "Poets in all ages have despised riches and grandeur, which the *Jacobin* has transmuted into a hatred of everything rich and great, and has declared that natural and eternal warfare should exist between rich and poor." The universality of their emotions and appeals is mercilessly ridiculed, as based on the idea of the innate goodness of the "natural man" and the "noble savage." "What Otaheite is, let Britain be," whom cold laws and colder customs bind.

"And Love then only flaps his purple wings  
When uncontrolled by priestcraft and by kings."

The "*Anti-Jacobin*" comments gravely upon the vicious refinements of civilised society in respect to marriage, and the consequent appearance of "that two-headed monster Man and Wife." To the principles based on moral truth and gospel law the *Jacobins* have opposed innate sense of right, fancy and taste, and "nature's impulse all unchecked by Art."

Canning and his friends then turned to the more purely literary side of the movement upon the Continent, and ridiculed the excessive sensibility of Rousseau and that school of romance and sentiment of which Kotzebue, Schiller and Goethe were the reigning representatives. "The Rovers" happily satirizes their calm disregard of the classic unities of time and space, in the belief that unity of action alone was sufficient. It is aimed chiefly at Goethe's "*Stella*," Schiller's "*Robbers*"; and Kotzebue's "*The Stranger*," which Sheridan



had helped to translate. Rogero, the Prisoner in Weimar Abbey appears as the symbol of false mediævalism, and clad in rusty armour and clanking his chains amidst coffins' scutcheons, deaths head's and cross-bones, sings as follows :

"Sun moon and thou vain world adieu,  
That kings and priests are plotting in,  
Here doomed to starve on water-gruel.  
Never shall I see the University of Gottingen."

The announcement of the signing of Magna Charta is read by two Englishmen, Beefington and Puddingfield, at Weimar in the "Daily Advertiser," which also informs them that Bacon has been made Chancellor and their own outlawry reversed. The sad story of Rogero comes to their ears and they resolve to release him. The waiter reveals himself as a Knight Templar in disguise, and the army of Liberty is swollen by the advent of Troubadours returning from the Crusades and Prussian and Austrian Grenadiers from the Seven Years' War. They vainly summon the Abbey to deliver up Rogero and attack it, but without success until the arrival of Q. Curtius and Manius Curius Dentatus, in their proper military habits with the Roman Eagle and the battering ram. Despite the gallant sallies of ministers and lay-brothers the gates are forced, the den of priestcraft and superstition falls amid the shouts of its assailants, and Rogero is released.

In the "New Morality," Canning shows how the Revolutionists have practised their doctrines of universal love and fraternity. Sensibility, that "sweet child of Rousseau's Sickly Fancy," is

"Taught by nice scale to mete her feelings strong  
False by degrees and exquisitely wrong ;—  
For the crushed beetle first,—the widowed dove,  
—and last of all,  
For Parents, Friends, a King and Country's fall.  
... Droops in soft sorrow o'er a faded flower,  
O'er a dead jackass pours the pearly shower ;—  
But hears unmoved of Loire's ensanguined flood,  
Choked up with slain ; of Lyons drenched in blood ?

The enmity the Jacobins have excited between rich and poor has resulted only in confiscation,

"in whose sweeping toils  
The poor man's pittance and the rich man's spoils,  
Mixed in one common mass are swept away  
To glut the short lived tyrant of the day."

Freedom has resulted only in the cruel and bloody despotism of the "anointed Five Directors," who are concerned only with plunder or with bribes. The moral character of these apostles of virtue is described in a style that only the eighteenth century could appreciate or print. La Reveillere Lepaux, the "Sovereign Priest or Directorial Lama," had devised a religion consisting chiefly in the adoration of a great Book, wherein all the virtuous actions of Society were to be entered, and which was to serve as a guide of all times of crisis like the Sibylline Books. Otherwise the new faith seems to have been an anticipation of Comte and the religion of Humanity. Christ is a "Counter Revolutionist," and Lepaux therefore is the one object whom atheists worship, and to whom all republicans "wave their red caps, and chaunt a jocund strain." This song became the stock defence of persons tried in English Courts for blasphemy who pointed to this passage as an excuse for their own utterance.

"Praise him each Jacobin and fool and knave,  
And your cropped heads, in sign of worship wave,  
All creeping creatures venomous and low  
Paine, Williams, Godwin, Holcroft, praise Lepaux!"

In a letter to Lord Auckland, from which quotation has already been made, Canning writes, "It is parodied from Milton not from the Psalm (Benedicite)", which seems an evasion in the nature of casuistry. "If anything should occur to you in the shape of note, comment, or exposition, particularly anything historical relative to the French characters (to Lafayette for example) or to any scoundrels or—of the same school you cannot do me a greater pleasure than by communicating it." He goes on to say he had thought of publishing in the new edition "a copious dissertation in the form of a note to explain . . . the general principles on which coarse diction in the chastisement of coarse wickedness is not excusable only but in some degree necessary, . . . and I should hope it may do away all offence by evincing the real scope and purity of the author's intention." Such then was his defence. "I feel no uneasiness, whatever may be the result of ridiculing the abettors of vice and French principles" wrote the coarsest of English caricaturists. It is to be feared that the explanations of Canning and the complacency of Gillray were viewed with equal distrust and suspicion by Mrs. Grundy and Wilberforce.

In the "New Morality" Canning turned suddenly upon the English admirers of the Jacobins, accusing them of vices



equal only to their absurdities, and of the additional crime of which the great originals were at least happily innocent, that of servile imitation. "How do we ape thee France," is the constant charge of the satirist. Condorcet is presented to English readers "filtered through the dregs of Paine," Coleridge, Southey, Lamb and Priestley are blind worshippers of Rousseau and Lepaux. The only two Englishmen who had shown much originality were Erasmus Darwin and Payne Knight. The former, in the "Loves of the Vegetables" and the latter in "the Progress of Civil Society," had attempted in a pseudo-scientific manner to make that comparison between Man and Nature, which Herbert Spencer subsequently drew out with such minute precision. The didactic and prosaic parts of each poem are mimicked with ludicrous skill. The softer passions, hitherto supposed to belong to humanity.

"Warm 'midst seas of ice the melting whales,  
Cools the crimped cod, fierce pangs to perch imparts  
Shrinks shrivelled shrimps but opens oysters' hearts!"

Every animal except rash and lawless Man has his part and lot assigned in creation's plan. "The feathered race with pinions skim the air, not so the mackerel and still less the bear." The owl does not descend and crop the tender flower with the flocks, or the heifer fish-like strive to swim. "Fortes creantur fortibus et bonis," say they with Horace.

"Uncostly Cabbage springs from cabbage-seed  
Lettuce, to lettuce, leeks to leeks succeed ;  
Nor e'er did cooling cucumbers presume  
To flower like myrtle or like violets bloom."

Only the inconceivable folly and presumption of man has induced him to

"Resign his native rights for meaner things,  
For Faith and Fetters—Laws and Priests and Kings."

To discredit the "moral influence of Jacobinism" was to Canning of more importance than the checking of its political ambitions. The "Anti-Jacobin" therefore turned and attacked the Whigs whom it persisted in regarding as a united party. In reality there were three distinct parties often opposed to one another, the Radicals led by Horne Tooke and Stanhope, the Whigs by Sheridan and Fox, the Reformers by Grey. Tooke might have asked France to succour John Bull, "since oppressed by the rod of a King and a God, the cup of his misery's full." Grey and Fox would not have welcomed such an army to England,



"Whose shores are all lined with the friends of Reform.  
Confiscation and murder attend in her train  
With meek-eyed sedition, the daughter of Paine."

Grey's motions for Reform were too modest for Tooke and too revolutionary for Fox. Yet all the Whigs are shown as unanimous for "one grand Radical Reform" and as desiring an army from France "to improve our corrupt constitution." According to the New Morality the Whig in his

"reasoned view  
Thy interest England ranks with thine Peru—  
France at our doors he sees no danger nigh,  
But heaves for Turkey's woes the impartial sigh,  
A steady patriot of the world alone,  
The friend of every country but his own."

Horne Tooke and Fox differed as much in cosmopolitan and republican sympathies, as both did from Grey on Reform yet the "Anti-Jacobin" makes them inseparable boon-companions. The waters were out and the danger nigh, to encourage Reform was to bore through the dyke, which stood between us and the boundless flood of French principles. Lafayette and de Stael are as infamous as Billaud-Varennes and Carrier, Fox and Grey are as revolutionary as Thelwall, who never blew the head off his pot of beer without wishing it was that of a King. To say with Fox, that the Revolutionists had acted foolishly but meant well, was the reverse of true candour.

"Give me the avowed, the erect, the manly foe,  
Bold I can meet perhaps can turn his blow ;  
But of all plagues, good Heaven, Thy wrath can send,  
Save, save, oh save me from the candid friend !"

This policy of collective abuse skilfully attributed the worst excesses of each individual or section to the whole party, and the charges of a want of patriotism and a surfeit of extravagance clung to the Whigs for a generation.

Mindful perhaps of the old Whig sarcasms against himself Canning bespattered the Whig leaders with personal abuse in a style worthy of Churchill or Smollett. Lansdowne is, with cutting reference both to his well earned nickname of the "Jesuit" and to his French principles, called "Nature's simple child." Erskine whose egotism was a proverb, "at clubs and taverns sweetly sings of self, while yawning Whigs attend, self first last midst and without end." The Duke of Northumberland is reminded that his name is Smithson not Percy, and both he and the Duke of Norfolk are covered with

ridicule for their somewhat shabby attempts to evade the taxes upon powder and liveried servants. Fox, "the Catiline of modern times," swears eternal vows to Horne Tooke, in company with his "Goose." This is Sir Robert Adair who had written "Half a letter to demolish Burke." Amid an extraordinary mixture of metaphors

"One luckless slip the meaning over strains  
And loads his blunderbuss with Bedford's brains."

"He transmutes," says a cruel comment, "the illustrious head of the House of Russell into a metal, to which it is not for us to say how near or how remote the affinity may have been." Adair was sent by Fox on "half a mission" to Russia, which is satirised in an Oriental Epistle from Bawba-dara-Adul-phoolah. He had been a student at a German University, and feeling a "great attraction for the fair sex," fell in love with a Professor's daughter. As Rogero he therefore sings,

"There first for thee my passion grew  
Sweet sweet Matilda Pottingen,  
Thou wast the daughter to my Tu-  
Tor Law Professor at the U-  
Niversity of Gottingen."

Finally, Whitbread is not allowed to forget that he is the son of a brewer, or the Duke of Bedford that a champion of social equality cannot well be a landowner. When the Jacobins appear

"they will vast sums advance,  
The Land and Malt of Jacobin Finance."

Such extracts give the tone and character of the satire of the day. England has had many other satirists but none quite like those of the "Anti-Jacobin." Pope used a poisoned dagger, Praed's gentle wit "ne'er carried a heart stain away on its blade," but the satire of both was almost wholly social. Byron and Shelley were too absorbed in their hatred of all existing institutions to write political satire of more than a vague and denunciatory character. Tom Moore's political satires are among his happiest efforts, always melodious easy and witty. But he is ever the literary man showing his skill of fence. The "Anti-Jacobin" errs on the other side. As we have seen, its personalities are abundant and coarse, yet they have always a political meaning and effect. Its advocacy of principles sometimes actually sinks into preaching. In Dryden alone were united the highest literary art with true political satire. But the "Anti-Jacobin" has a high literary



value, and at its best combines genuine fun and humour with biting wit and easy rollicking metres with polished phrases. Even fastidious old Horace Walpole praised it and its author Mr. Canning "a young man of allowed parts." No one who ever read them will forget the "Knife-grinder" with its ludicrous travesty of Southey's Sapphics or "the Song of Rogero." Some of the imitations of Gray and Horace are worth reading even now, when parodists rival the authors they copy both in excellence and multitude. To the parodies of Southey, Payne Knight and Darwin a still higher praise is due, for it is through their sole agency that the originals are Tithonus-like consumed by a cruel immortality. The "New Morality" is the last effort of expiring classicism. By its force, fire and epigrammatic skill it makes us forget the cold and rigid forms, and monotonous cadences to which Pope himself could not always give life. But apart from literature the Anti-Jacobin is unique in its political influence. It is the symbol and to some extent the cause of the changed attitude of England to France.

"Must wit be found alone on falsehood's side,  
Unknown to Truth, to Virtue unallied?"

wrote Frere in the few lines he contributed to the "New Morality," and felt therefore compelled to rank Gifford's "Baviad" with the best work of Pope. Those personages then known as "the Dons, the Highfliers and the Bigwigs," who had screamed forth their shocked protests against the Revolution, had inspired only ridicule and contempt. Scoffing at the idea of a crusade and a war for our advantage, Fox has, written: "Oh calumniated Crusaders, how rational and moderate were your objects! Oh tame and feeble Cervantes with what a timid pencil and faint colours have you painted the portrait of a disordered imagination!" Sheridan too had put forth all his powers of sarcasm, so that till now all the wit and the ridicule had been on the Whig side. The nation, already nervous, hysterical and anxious, was not encouraged by the frenzied denunciations of Burke to regain sanity and self-possession. It was needful not only to denounce but to laugh at the Jacobins, to show that even if always terrible they had never ceased to be ridiculous. "Right and Philosophy," said Canning on March 1st, 1799, "are the two surnames of tyranny and injustice in the French vocabulary of freedom." The note of the "Anti-Jacobin" was

"Reason Philosophy Fiddledum Diddledum,  
Peace and Fraternity Higgledy Piggledy."



The Friend of Humanity finds the English Knife-grinder with no grievances, so he bursts into rage; "kicks the Knife-grinder, overturns his wheel and exit in a transport of universal philanthropy and republican enthusiasm." In the roars of laughter which greeted these sallies the English nation forgot its terror and dismay. Highwaymen perished in England, not because of a code which dripped with blood, but because of the Beggars' Opera, and French principles suffered less from the thunders of Burke than from the sneers of the "Anti-Jacobin." They were to the Jacobins what Pascal's Letters were to the Jesuits.

From a serious point of view the power and effect of the "Anti-Jacobin" lay in its opposition to cosmopolitan principles on grounds that flattered English pride. "Guard we our own hearts and manlier virtues, but French in heart, though Victory crown our brow, and England will be no more." They upheld the insular doctrines of regulated and balanced freedom, of the sacredness of property and prescriptive rights. Following Burke, again they showed the good in old customs and traditions in prejudices and even in respectability. The complete reversal of existing systems would end in despotism and defeat of the ends desired. Not Reason but Experience must guide, abstract French theories must yield to English practice. The Revolutionists' idea of Reform was to sever the tree at the roots Burke feared even to pluck off the dead leaves, Canning would have been satisfied with a little pruning. But with the progress of the war he felt that for the security of Civilization and Society, limits must be set to the progress of these doctrines and England defended from the contagion of French principles. France and its madmen were to be encircled in a ring of flame, until, like the scorpion, seeing no escape they turned their venom against themselves and destroyed one another. A passionate admiration of Burke, "The mighty sea mark of these troubled days," pervades the "Anti-Jacobin" no less in the passages most witty or ironical as in those indignant or solemn. Indeed so apparent is his influence that, but for the irreverence of imagining him without his purple robes, it might be said that the "Anti-Jacobin" was Burke in a jester's motley and spangles.

The extreme conservatism displayed by Canning in the "Anti-Jacobin" held the germ of several errors. One of these was the wholesale condemnation of any attempt at constitutional reform or improvement, another the determination

to preserve institutions less because they were good than because they were old. Again, no one wishes to absolve Robespierre or Carnot or Tallien from the guilt of shedding innocent blood, but the violence of the "Anti-Jacobin" was illogical. To assume that they were the sole contrivers of the misery and horrors of France and of Europe was an error, like that of Rousseau, who said that every evil was due to Government and the best remedy its destruction. The deeper social influences, the unparalleled economic chaos, the progress of the scientific spirit, the intrigues of the emigrés, the armed intervention of the stranger, all these were causes independent of the influence of the Jacobin doctrinaires, which lent force and savagery to the French Revolution. In England the force of the agitators was but on the surface, in Burke's grand phrase they were but the noisy grasshoppers chirping in the field without disturbing the placid cattle. But in France, agitation had its force and its impulse less from individuals than from what Burke in a less elegant figure described as "the swinish multitude." The cool reason of Canning or of Burke would have seen that the success of French principles depended as much on the conditions of the country to which they appealed, as on the violence of the appeal itself. Neither would then have attached a superstitious sanctity to the abuses of the British Constitution, or imagined that the personal government of the King or the existence of rotten boroughs in Cornwall were the two safeguards of English Liberty. Uneasy qualms of conscience seem sometimes to have afflicted Burke. "It is," said he in his last years, "the hovering in the air of this tremendous mischief that has made me an abettor and supporter of kings and courts." Though Canning would never have erred so grossly as Burke, who found 'all the elements of constitutional liberty in the old French monarchy,' yet the lessons he drew from this period coloured his whole future policy and life. Henceforth the Whig Reformers were to him but Jacobins in masks, whose proposals struck at the balance of the Constitution and shook the foundations of Society.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PUPIL OF PITT—IN AND OUT OF OFFICE 1797-1807

BURKE had declared the restoration of the Bourbons to be an indispensable preliminary to peace, but Canning followed Pitt in requiring only proofs that the existing Government was stable and firm. As early as 1795 when Prussia had abandoned the Coalition, Pitt had offered terms which the French Directory had rudely rejected. That he was sincerely anxious for peace is as undoubted as that the nature and continuance of the war had overthrown all his anticipations. In 1796 further offers were made on the one indispensable condition that Belgium should be restored to the Emperor. The Archduke Charles had inflicted serious defeats on the French in Germany, but the latter had been encouraged by the secret co-operation of Prussia. More than all the marvellous victories of Bonaparte in Italy had awakened the enthusiasm of France, and the spoils of Lombardy had stimulated the hopes and the avarice of the Directors. Finding it impossible to isolate England from Austria, they dismissed Lord Malmesbury in October, 1796. Early in that year Canning had been appointed Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, but his influence on the negotiations had been relatively small. For the next two years he rarely stirred from his office taking little exercise, toiling in London during the heats of summer, and seldom speaking in Parliament. Under the tuition of Pitt and Grenville (the Foreign Secretary) he made his first acquaintance with administrative detail and with office, where his industry does much to explain his wonderful knowledge and success in conducting his own foreign policy in the future.

In June, 1797, Pitt renewed diplomatic intercourse with the Directory and despatched Lord Malmesbury to Lisle to endeavour to arrange a peace. Incidentally, Canning became



the pivot of the whole negotiation, and to his tact and patience was entrusted the difficult task of reconciling the three or four divergent views of policy held by Pitt, Malmesbury, Grenville and the Cabinet at large. The autocratic power of Pitt had been such as no premier ever exercised before or since. In fact, the position of premier was not only unknown to the constitutional theory and to pedants, but equally so to practice and to his colleagues in the Cabinet. Walpole had fallen, not as is generally believed merely because defeated in Parliament, but because Newcastle and his colleagues in the Cabinet resented his autocracy and did nothing to influence the Lower House in his favour. Pitt, with the support of King George, had succeeded in establishing a supremacy over his colleagues in comparison to which that of Walpole was mild. But to the Portland Whigs, who joined the Ministry in 1794, such power vested in the hands of one man was a novelty, and as objectionable as to the haughty Grenville who wished to assert his independence of the Prime Minister. Hence arose a method of conducting foreign policy comparable only to that sinister system of double correspondence, by which Louis XV. alternately betrayed or supported his ministers. Grenville and Pitt suspected and tried to counterwork one another. Pitt secretly instructed Malmesbury to make peace even at the price of ceding the Cape and Ceylon, a policy quite different from that outlined in the instructions of Grenville who wished to continue the war and desired the negotiations to fail. Disputes in the Cabinet were constant though we trust that Pitt "was not doomed to hear the frequent inkstand whizzing past his ear," a method of persuasion, says Canning, employed by Rewbell in consultations of the Directory at this time. On July 20, 1797, Canning tells Lord Malmesbury that Grenville has devised and carried a resolution at the Cabinet "to tie up Pitt's tongue alone, whom he suspected of communicating with other persons, and fortifying himself with out-of-door opinions against the opinions brought forward in Council; by those with whom he differed in his general view of the negotiations." Canning was unjustly supposed to be the pipe through which Pitt's information flowed to the Press. But Pitt and Grenville were at least agreed on the one point of preventing the interference of minor members of the Cabinet. The resolution ordered that Canning and Hammond should henceforth alone open and decipher despatches from the seat of correspondence. Pitt

and Grenville arranged that all memoranda on foreign policy for Cabinet circulation should be written in the execrable hand of Hammond, which formed an unconscious cipher to which it was hoped the ingenuity and patience of the rest of the Cabinet would be unequal to finding the key. Malmesbury was in future to send one despatch of vague generalities for the Cabinet, which even if deciphered would help little towards the formation of an opinion, and another to Grenville containing important information. Against this practice Canning remonstrated, and even when names and details were withheld did his best to contribute the substance and progress of the negotiations to the Cabinet, that there might be "a chance of fair deliberation."

Seldom indeed has a young man been placed in a position so difficult and delicate. Opening all the despatches to the Cabinet and Grenville, whose secretary he was, he also received from Lord Malmesbury extra official intelligence for the ear of Pitt alone, to whom he was devoted. Replying in the official and warlike despatches of Lord Grenville, he was induced by Pitt to send private letters embodying and insisting on the policy of peace. Malmesbury like all bold and successful diplomatists was quite ready to transgress the letter of his instructions, more especially when perplexed by the mutually destructive policies of his two masters. Canning bore the burden of interpretation, standing between both he endeavoured to be loyal to both, and sometimes vanquished the impossible and succeeded; "Give us," he writes to Malmesbury, July 13, 1797, "then something to show as an acquisition . . . but remember what may be very splendid as an acquisition may be very insufficient as a cause of quarrel . . . we can break off upon nothing but what will rouse us from sleep and stupidity into a new life and action—'what will create a soul under the ribs of death'—for we are now soulless and spiritless; and what would do this except the defence of Portugal or the preservation of our integrity." The first sentence shows the reasonable spirit of compromise, the readiness to make concessions which distinguished Pitt, the rest the haughtiness and the dauntless spirit of Grenville.

Canning had therefore to receive and answer three sets of despatches, secret for the Cabinet, more secret for Grenville, most secret for Pitt. Such mystery sometimes assumed the air of stage-conspiracy. "I saw Brooks, the messenger," he writes on July 27, "silent as a ghost, gliding by my bow-window, and bringing 'tributary turbots' as well as most



secret despatches." From his letters to Mr. Legh we know that his anxiety was almost insupportable, and he complained "of the difficulty of keeping up the game." He had indeed to pass over a bridge sharp as a razor, with an abyss on either side of it. Everyone agreed that the continuance of the negotiation had been made possible only by his temper and tact. Pitt had already resolved that the difference between him and Lord Grenville could only be settled by the resignation of one or other, and as he afterwards told Malmesbury, "it would have been Lord Grenville." Just at this moment (Sept. 1797) came a coup d'état devised by Bonaparte and executed by Augereau, which reorganized the Directory, and broke off negotiation. As peace was on the point of being secured with Austria at Campo Formio, the policy of detaching members from the Coalition had succeeded, and politeness to England was needless. For a moment a hope lingered that the influence of Maret and Talleyrand, who were to the Directory what Pitt was to Grenville, might prevail. But this too flickered out, Lord Malmesbury received his papers and the war was resumed. Canning and Ellis vented their wrath, and filled up the time no longer wasted in negotiations, in writing the "Anti-Jacobin."

During the years 1798-1800 Canning was occupied in defending the policy of Pitt both at home and abroad, and with less official work set about winning for himself fame both as orator and debater. In 1799 he resigned his under-secretaryship, as he had often threatened to do, doubtless chafing at the cold haughtiness of his chief who despite his great ability, was on his own confession incapable of managing or understanding men. He became a member of the Board of Control over which Dundas presided, and joint-paymaster to the Forces (1800). He also accepted the post of Receiver-General of the Alienation Office with a salary of £500 a year, a sinecure he retained on quitting office in 1801. That Canning should be compelled to take posts unequal to his fame and ability shows how hardly the poor man then entered his kingdom of office. Canning was aware of the prejudice against him in consequence of his alleged defection from the Whigs. But here he found a parallel without his excuses in Castlereagh, who had somewhat peculiarly changed his views.

Our manager he, who in Ireland was nurst  
Sang 'Erin go bragh' for the galleries first.  
But finding Pitt's interest a much better thing  
Changed his note of a sudden to 'God save the King'.



Yet Castlereagh though only a year older had been Irish Secretary since 1797. On Nov. 28, 1799, Canning gave Lord Boringdon his views on the question of office. He did not desire to rise too high or too suddenly, but he protested that Castlereagh and Grenville had received high honours before his own age. More than their equal in ability he lacked only a name, which like theirs would give him a hereditary title to Cabinet rank. Yet without important office Canning had more influence than most Cabinet Ministers between 1796-1801. Occasionally the sole, he was often the chief, confidant of Pitt, who had the highest opinion of his talents. In 1804(\*) Pitt sent to him a sketch of finance, and consulted him on the advisability of continuing the war. The first financier and statesman of the day takes advice, on questions of which he should be the best judge in the world, from a young man with whom he has quarrelled. He clearly thought the sound judgment of his favourite pupil must be obtained on this vital point, even though their confidences and their intimacy were a shadow of what they once had been. No panegyrist could have more extolled or enhanced the ability of the youthful statesman.

On Dec. 11, 1798, Canning delivered a famous speech† against resuming negotiations with France. Henceforth he was in the front rank of orators, second only to Pitt on the one side, and able to cope with Sheridan and even with Fox on the other. In a formidable indictment he denounced the French doctrines of universal freedom and fraternity, as nothing but a disguise to mask universal dominion. He exposed the hypocrisy of the Directory which, he said, revenges on the Swiss the slaughter of the Burgundians a thousand years before, while to conciliate the spirit of Vercingetorix it "punishes the Pope for Caesar's crimes." The system of client-republics by which France cloaked her conquests was a pretence, and in their opposition to her academic cruelties lay hope of salvation. "Are we to look for filial attachment" he cried, "in the Cisalpine Republic whom in preference to the others she appears to have selected as a living subject in political anatomy; whom she has delivered up tied and bound, to a series of butchering, bungling philosophical professors to distort and mangle and lop, and

\* Malmesbury, iv. 324. Stratford—Redcliffe's Recollections.

† Pitt called it 'one of the best ever heard on any occasion.' Auckland Papers iv. 72.

stretch its limbs into all sorts of fantastical shapes and to hunt through its palpitating frame the vital principle of republicanism?" This passage electrified the House, which saw revived in him something of the passion and fire of Burke. At the news of Nelson's glorious victory on the Nile, he said, "Even the vassal republics leapt in their chains. We must," he said, "seek help from every quarter even from the Grand Signior, who should not be rejected merely because he wears a long beard and a long gown." At least such an alliance could not be denounced by the Opposition, whose 'large and liberal system of ethics' embraced humanity and proclaimed all men brothers. England can be precariously safe as long as there is no safety for the rest of Europe. "Hoard up your safety for your own use," says an honourable member (Mr. Tierney). "Lend a portion of it to other nations that it may be returned to you tenfold in the preservation and security of the world, is the dictate of a larger and I think a sounder policy."

Canning had described with much wit in the "Anti-Jacobin" the progress and the ambitious designs of Bonaparte in Egypt.

"His army each day growing bolder and finer  
With the Turcoman tribes he subdues Asia Minor  
. . . and Bucharians and Afghans and Persians and Tartars,  
Chokes the wretched Mogul in his grandmother's garters,  
And will hang him to dry in the Luxemburg Hall  
With the plunder of Carthage and spoils of Bengal."

On his return to France Bonaparte overturned the Directory and made himself supreme by the famous coup d'etat of 18 Brumaire (Nov. 9, 1799), which in its immediate political effects may rank as the most important revolution in the whole of modern history. The news was a bitter disillusionment to the Whigs who had now beheld their hero degraded and sunk in the despot. Bonaparte had shown that Revolutions were not worth their price and that Humanity in every age endured the same conditions of doubt and disenchantment. Liberty had resulted in licence, and new dictator was but old despot writ large. Full of this conviction Canning writes thus to Lord Boringdon (Nov. 19, 1799). "Huzza! Huzza! Huzza! . . . Bonaparte the avowed tyrant of his country is an object to be contemplated with enthusiasm . . . Tell me not that he will make war with more vigour or peace with more dexterity than the exploded Directory have done; I care not—war we can brave and from peace I hope we shall have the spirit to save ourselves; and



as to power, I would give France India to ensure her a despotism and think the purchase a cheap one. No! No! it is the thorough destruction of the principles of exaggerated liberty—it is the lasting ridicule thrown upon all systems of democratic equality—it is the galling conviction carried home to the bawlers for freedom in this and every other country that there never was nor will be nor can be, a leader of a mob faction who does not mean to be the lord, and not the servant, of the people. It is this that makes the name of Bonaparte dear to me.” Thus as always Canning attached most importance to discrediting the moral influence of the Jacobins, and rejoiced that the prophesies of Burke and the sneers of the “Anti-Jacobin” had come bitterly true.

Bonaparte lost no time in negotiating for peace and, for that purpose, addressed a letter directly to King George. It was answered by an official declaration, drawn up by Canning, which took no notice of his letter and which was written in the third person and in English. “I think,” wrote Canning to Lord Boringdon, “the use of our own English native tongue at all times and under all circumstances right, in the present instance peculiarly politic and in answer to the letter which has produced it unavoidable, and I pray that it may never be disused again.” That he should have been employed to draw up this declaration is another of the many testimonies to his ability and skill, for he had resigned the Foreign Office in March, 1799, and this letter was written on Jan. 3, 1800. The negotiation failed, not only because of Bonaparte’s diplomatic indiscretions, but because the Ministry had no confidence in the duration of his government or good faith. Jacobin and republican ideals were indeed dead, but the enthusiasms and forces they had created still lived. “It is only I who can tame them,” said Napoleon, when he heard at St. Helena of renewed Jacobin revolts. Orson proved useful to Valentine, and the tamer of a wild beast has often put its native strength and ferocity at his service. Even so the marvellous genius of one man united the savage Jacobin energy with all the other forces of France in the accomplishment of his own limitless ambitions.

On February 10, 1801, Pitt announced that he intended to resign, the ostensible cause being his failure to include Catholic Emancipation in the Act for the Legislative Union with Ireland. The King had known nothing of this project till Loughborough betrayed the secret, when he declared himself violently opposed to the design. It had been



hotly debated in the Cabinet, and with the King against him, Pitt could not hope for his usual ascendancy. "Had I remained I should have been on a totally different footing," he avowed to Canning. He sought no interview or explanation with the King, and even so enthusiastic an admirer as Lord Ashbourne admits that his purpose was but feebly maintained and avowed. With great and noble ambitions, Pitt undoubtedly loved power and adored Downing Street. To relinquish office without remonstrance for a single cause, for which his resignation had not been demanded, was not the best way to serve that cause or to vindicate his character. Addington, appointed his successor, had at first declared himself a mere place-filler. Pitt did not formally lay down the seals till March 14, and meanwhile had declared himself ready to abandon the Catholic cause. On March 8, Canning wrote to him showing that no cause prevented his resumption of office. But pride led Pitt to desire entreaty, and he stooped to suggest that a peer should use his privilege, and advise the Sovereign to reopen negotiations. A second attempt somewhat hasty and ill-advised, in which Canning addressed himself to Addington, also broke down. The great statesman, though he had avowedly abandoned the principle which he alleged as the cause of his retirement, refused to resume office apparently from motives of personal delicacy or pride. He had expressed a wish that his retirement should not affect his friends. Lord Chatham found his attachment to Pitt compelled him to remain. "Others" says Charles Ellis very bitterly, aiming especially at Eldon, "felt their friendship to Pitt and their duty to their country particularly and more strongly call upon them to take office in support of their country at the crisis when he deserts it." As for several others, among whom was Canning, "when Pitt the only man in their opinion fit to be Minister went out they followed his example." It is superfluous to point out that Pitt's advice did nothing to further, and everything to hinder, the cause he had professed to espouse.

But his whole conduct is inexplicable on the simple ground usually assumed. In the beginning, Canning was more deeply committed than Pitt himself to the Catholic Cause, and unlike him had never offered to abandon it at the finish. Yet Pitt when pressed by Canning told him that he regretted his (Canning's) resignation on public grounds, though he took it as a mark of personal regard. No person who resigns on behalf of a principle would reprove another person, whose honour was more engaged, for following his example. The

real cause is to be found in the situation abroad. In June, 1800, Bonaparte had won the great victory of Marengo over the Austrian forces in Italy. When Moreau followed with a great victory amid the snows of a December night at Hohenlinden, peace between Austria and France was only a question of weeks. Pitt's pride and expressed opinions pledged him to continue the war but prudence whispered that a respite, however brief, would enable England to recruit her exhausted strength. Both ministers and people were in the deepest despondence.\* "Do people hold up their heads?" wrote Canning to Frere (Sept. 16, 1800) in high indignation. "Does the Cabinet meet by daylight? Who kicks them individually as they go up into the Cabinet-Room?" It is clear that Pitt desired Addington to make peace, whilst he himself retired just at the moment when he knew Austria had been forced to abandon the English Alliance. Hookham Frere, on Canning's authority, says, "He (Pitt) therefore determined to leave to other hands the credit of making and if possible of maintaining such a peace." "God forgive Pitt for the part he has had in this peace," wrote Canning.

How could Pitt, in face of his indignant repudiation of peace in August, 1800, and his avowals both old and new that he would never leave the Netherlands in French hands, even listen to terms of peace to which another might consent? It is deeply significant that Grenville, the inflexible opponent of peace, resigned. Dundas indeed blurted out the truth to Malmesbury, very unadvisedly and probably unintentionally; "If these new ministers stay in and make peace it will only smooth matters the more for us afterwards," said he. At least it was a common charge of the day, that Pitt's Catholic zeal was but the pretext of his retirement. It is supported by the recorded contemporary evidence of Canning and Dundas, his two greatest confidants up till the very moment of his fall.† Lord Malmesbury, Lord Auckland, Lord Pelham and Hookham Frere, who knew the inner workings of the politics of the day, all thought the same. To these we must add the‡ judgment of foreign diplomats, which is always supposed to anticipate that of posterity. Nor need this action seem a stain on Pitt's memory, for he did his best for his small

\* Quoted from Miss Festing's Hookham Frere and his Friends.

† v. Malmesbury IV. 109 et seqq. Frere's letters passim.

‡ See the letters of Vansittart (Ambassador to Denmark) to Hawkesbury Foreign Sec. 5 March 1801.

B. M. Add. MSS. 31, 233. Sorel also holds this view.



personal following. His main support had always been in the Government boroughs, whose members mechanically followed all reigning ministers. As an individual he wished to pass from the Government, and this was what his followers could not understand and what his alleged motives obscured. His conduct was not absolutely correct, but it is to be pardoned by anyone acquainted with the mazy labyrinths and tortuous windings of politics. He had no real party obligations to consider, and might sacrifice much for national ends which his resignation might promote. Perhaps he alone among politicians loved party and office less and country more.

It was in vain that Canning endeavoured to draw Achilles from his tent. He wrote a letter to Pitt bidding him awake and resume the Government. After some delay Pitt replied on 20th April, 1801, in a letter in which severe reproof was mingled with a kind of paternal tenderness and a wish expressed that their political differences would not interrupt their private intimacy. "I considered my intercourse with Pitt as closed for ever," wrote Canning to Hookham Frere on July 12. Pitt must have felt this separation deeply, for he took the kindest interest in Canning. A man to the world austere and forbidding, Pitt in reality possessed the warmest feelings and the kindest heart. But a kind of awkward reserve and a sense of official dignity made him keep most men at a distance. Till he knew Canning his only real friends had been Wellesley, Dundas, and Wilberforce. Of these the former was now in India, Dundas had too much of the coarse fibre of a man of business and of the world, while Wilberforce sometimes wearied him with his didactic and importunate piety. Canning was the wittiest of men and the nicest of scholars, and to him Pitt had opened all his heart. He had assumed the attitude of a guardian and a father, and Canning in return had loved him as a son. Instinctively feeling that he was now no longer in his confidence Canning uttered bitter words to Frere. He complained of "confidence just enough to mislead and not enough to guide," and of "a want of candour" in Pitt which had delivered him "as an unreserved sacrifice to Addington." He shows a quite childish delight when he finds that his own predictions about peace have been truer than those of Pitt. Later in the year a reconciliation was patched up and Pitt was present with the Princess of Wales at the christening of Canning's first son. Mr. and Mrs. Canning stayed at Walmer Castle with Pitt, who fell ill and was nursed by them with great tenderness. The



sphinx-like statesman was privately grateful but politically unresponsive, and the harmony was as yet incomplete. On May 25, 1802, Pitt was induced to preside at a dinner inaugurating the "Pitt Club." This was entirely the work of Canning, and a number of affiliated institutions sprung up throughout the country on its model. It was for this inaugural ceremony that Canning composed those admirable verses "The Pilot that weathered the storm." Frere has preserved a most interesting verse which is much altered in the published editions ;—

'And oh if again the next tempest should rise,  
The dawns of peace should fresh darkness deform,  
\* When we turn to *thy hopeless retirement* our eyes,  
We shall long for the 'Pilot who Weathered the Storm.'

All this time Canning was using every effort along with Lord Malmesbury, Ellis, and a few others to drive Addington from office. That worthy though his abilities were particularly modest soon conceived himself to be a person of importance. No longer a place holder he aspired to be a great Minister. He had a following among old-fashioned Tories, as he professed to be a safe man. "At last we've got a government without any of those confounded men of genius," chuckled one old lord. To Canning it seemed absurd that this mediocrity, the "Doctor" as he was called from the circumstance of his father having been physician to Chatham, should keep Pitt from office. "Pitt," said he, "is to Addington, as London is to Paddington." He wrote of Addington as "the Pilot who moored us in peace." Squibs and verses flowed in endless number from his pen, but since he never acknowledged them the witty production of any hack-writer was attributed to him. He ridiculed the man of modest talents

"With moderate measures gently purging  
Ills that prey on Britain's weal,"

When the Government prepared some defences for the Thames Canning exclaimed,

"If blocks can the nation deliver  
Two places are safe from the French ;  
The first is the mouth of the river  
The second the Treasury Bench."

Also he recommended that

"That ponderous head, which ne'er presumed to think,  
But England tottered on perdition's brink."

\* This line restored by Frere—v. Festing's Hookham Frere.

should be used for purposes of naval defence. In a vision he sees some of Bonaparte's flotilla "wrecked on the Doctor's os frontis, and others foundering on his occiput." As a final extract we may give this ;

"Happy Britains guardian Gander,  
To rescue from the invading Gaul  
Her 'commerce, credit, Capital,'  
While Rome's great goose could save alone  
One Capitol—of senseless stone."

His pen was the more active because as he held a government pocket borough, he felt that he should abstain as far as possible from speaking in Parliament. These attacks probably harmed Canning as much as Addington himself. They may have brought it about that when the "Doctor" spoke in the House\* "no one listened but to laugh at him." But in the very beginning, according to Mr. Creevey, the ministry was "feeble beyond all powers of caricaturing . . . and supported only by that great mass of persons who always support all ministers, but who are ashamed to applaud these."

In France the politician who is ridiculed and in England the politician who ridicules is lost. Canning acquired a reputation for quizzing which injured any appreciation of his more solid qualities. His assaults seemed mainly personal and dictated less by his passionate desire for Pitt's return than his own wish for office. But that his objection to the ministry was political is clear. When the peace of Amiens was made he wrote passionately, "I would have cut off my right hand rather than signed that treaty." That he really feared the continuance of the ministry portended national disaster, is beyond doubt. On Oct. 8, 1802, he writes to Frere,† "with such champions as Bonaparte and the Doctor on either side this country has not a fair chance of being kept on its legs." Canning wrote letter after letter to Pitt and in Nov., projected a plan of a Round Robin to be signed by influential men, which should request Addington to resign. Lord Mulgrave betrayed the scheme to Pitt who vetoed it, to Canning's great disgust. On Dec. 8, 1802, Canning delivered a vigorous speech denouncing the conduct of the ministry and their inept diplomacy in the peace of Amiens. Pronouncing a panegyric on the amazing ascendant of the genius of Bonaparte and its danger to England, he declared he preferred a Man to all Measures for opposing him. "One great commanding spirit is worth them all."

\* From Creevey Papers, vol. i.

† From Festing's Hookham Frere and his Friends.



But Pitt was still enigmatic and inscrutable, not sorry to see Addington attacked, but too dignified to approve the method or the violence. At the end of February and the beginning of March, 1803, Addington feeling his weakness, negotiated with Pitt but absurdly proposed that they should serve together under Lord Chatham. Canning soon rejoiced to find Pitt "in a temper with Addington to which mine was mildness." But he still complains to Frere of "good opportunities romantically lost and ill ones vexatiously sought for to repair them."\* "I see no reason why A's administration should not hobble on and outlast the country. And this is the more provoking as I do really think there are means and hopes of raising the Country to a pitch of glory and power such as it has never attained before, if the administration were in able hands." In May, 1804, war was again declared and in June the question came before the House. Pitt, to evade direct approval or censure of the Ministry, moved the adjournment. He was defeated by a majority of 277, Canning regretfully voting against him for the first time in his life. Later in the year, as the gravity of the crisis increased, Pitt began to approach Fox, and united with him in opposition to the Ministry. Early in 1804 the ministerial majority sank to 37 and Addington resigned. The King sent for Pitt but as he refused to admit Fox into the Ministry the Grenvilles would not take office. Hardly a name of note besides that of Castlereagh and Lord Melville (Dundas) was to be found in Pitt's Cabinet. Weakened as he was Pitt turned in January, 1805, to seek the aid of Addington, who was created Lord Sidmouth and included in the Ministry, a circumstance which nearly produced Canning's resignation of his small post, the Treasurership of the Navy. On the policy of Pitt during his second ministry Canning had little influence, being no longer in his confidence, though towards the close of 1805 Pitt had resolved to admit him to the Cabinet. The time was crowded with great events which weighed heavily on the Prime Minister. The projected invasion of England had indeed been foiled, and as Canning wrote Bonaparte had

"O'er England's seas his new dominions planned  
While the red bolt yet flamed in Nelson's hand."

But the great Austrian defeats at Ulm and Austerlitz followed, and Europe lay at the feet of Napoleon. Tra-

\* Quoted from Festing's Hookham Frere and his Friends.

falgar was no compensation to Pitt who thought only of the general interests of Europe. The impeachment and disgrace of his dear friend Melville, had shaken and enfeebled a frame already worn out with illness and anxiety. The disasters to the Coalition were the final blow. During the third week of January, 1806, Charles Ellis wrote two hurried notes to Hookham Frere telling him of the dangerous illness of Pitt and bidding him hasten to Canning's side to comfort him. In \*Frere's correspondence is to be found a pathetic scrap of paper with the date of January 22nd. Canning begins by discussing some papers which Frere had sent him for inspection. Suddenly he breaks off and exclaims passionately ;—"But five hours dead—nay not five not so much and to be mentioned already as a fact—alas!"

Few will question the grave and majestic eulogy pronounced by Canning in Parliament on Feb. 3, 1806. "That brilliant luminary, whether its dawn was clouded or its meridian splendour obscured, had held a course glorious for the country and worthy to call forth its admiration and gratitude." One of the greatest of financiers and parliamentary leaders England ever produced, Pitt had shown himself possessed of political purity and independence at a time when his position depended almost entirely on the corrupt influences of the Crown. "Dispensing for near twenty years the favours of the Crown," wrote Canning in his epitaph, "he lived without ostentation and died poor." His liberal schemes of reform in commercial and domestic policy were checked by the French Revolution to the lasting injury of his Country. Without the genius of a great war-minister he had shown great courage and inflexible resolve in his resistance to the French Revolution. The Convention had set a price on his head and by a decree pronounced "*Le Monstre Pitt l'ennemi du genre humain.*" Its orators declared that the depreciation of assignats had been caused by his sinister measures which had flooded France with thousands of forged and valueless imitations manufactured in England. The Coalitions were built up by his guineas, every traitor to the Republic carried his gold in his pocket. Such fictions amused the Parisian mob but the real truth had another aspect. The policy of subsidizing Continental armies and conquering France in the Indies had been successful under Chatham. But Frederic the Great had fought for his kingdom and his life. The chief members of Pitt's Coalitions

\* Festing's Hookham Frere and his Friends.



had their eyes on Poland and Turkey as well as on France. Frederic William of Prussia took Pitt's money, used it to conquer his share of Poland and made peace with France. Catherine would not intervene until too late, whilst as for Austria,

" Her history nought repeats  
But broken leagues and subsidized defeats."

That this policy of subsidy was a failure cannot be denied and Canning himself, even before he became Foreign Secretary, had deemed it unsatisfactory. Much more than must it increase our appreciation of Pitt when he could declare his intense veneration and love for that great name, and "defy ingenuity . . . to trace any circle of greatness from which Mr. Pitt shall be excluded." In one respect Pitt was great as no other English statesman has been, in the legacy which he bequeathed to his country of youthful statesmen whom he had trained and inspired. Castlereagh, Canning, Wellesley, Liverpool, and in a sense Grenville were his most famous political descendants, representing the different aspects of his policy and mind. Servile imitation, obstinately pursued in the face of new conditions is often the most insincere form of insult, and to this Canning unlike the rest never stooped. He was to Pitt what Vandyke was to Rubens or Giotto to Cimabue. The favourite pupil, by the inspiration of his own genius, learnt as much from the weakness as from the strength of the master.

With Pitt's death the Ministry broke up and Canning's "political allegiance was buried in his grave." The Ministry of All the Talents succeeded, which included such incongruous elements as a Lord Chief Justice in the Cabinet, Fox and Sidmouth, Erskine, and Grenville, Windham and Grey. Grenville tried to detach some of Pitt's friends and offered splendidly to Canning who remained steady and from principle. He proved himself far their most dangerous opponent in debate, and happily compared their gigantic professions and dwarfish performance to a building in the style of Gothic architecture. "It is only remarkable for its huge windows that exclude the light and the narrow passages that lead to nothing." Sometimes his conduct was purely factious as when he criticized the Slavery Abolition Bill, saying, "it had taxed the ingenuity of man to frame a measure for that purpose with which he could not agree." One squib of the period may perhaps be attributed to him, though after this he certainly abjured all direct connection with the Press. At the age of



twenty-five Lord Henry Petty became Chancellor of the Exchequer, a result wholly due to his rank and social position. He is termed,

“Illustrious Roscius of the State  
New breeched and harnessed for Debate.”

Nor is the “Doctor” and the peace of Amiens forgotten ;

“Oh can thy cloak of Amiens staff,  
Once laughed to scorn by Blue and Buff,  
Hide thee from Windham’s jeers ?”

On the death of Fox the Ministry lost its greatest Talent, equal in weight and in worth to the nine others united. Grenville made despairing overtures to Canning, which he rejected with disdain. The King and the Ministry quarrelled with and deceived one another on the thorny subject of Catholic Relief, and Grenville was dismissed. The Duke of Portland formed a Ministry including Perceval Hawkesbury and Castlereagh. Canning was offered a choice between the Admiralty and Foreign Office and after some hesitation chose the latter. The Whigs and the Addingtonians foamed with rage at this appointment. “We shall see if a nation is to be saved by schoolboy jokes and doggerel rhymes by affronting petulance and by the tones and gestures of Mr. Pitt. When he (Canning) is jocular he is strong, when he is serious he is like Samson in a wig.” Thus wrote Sydney Smith voicing an opinion undoubtedly too common at this time. But the future was to show that it was well indeed for England, that at this crisis her fame and her fortune were entrusted to a statesman so high-souled and great-hearted as Canning.

## CHAPTER V

### CANNING AND NAPOLEON 1807-9

BEFORE he had accepted the Foreign Office, Canning had spoken of the struggle in which England was engaged, as one on which the fate of the world might depend. Even the Whigs could not suspect levity in such an utterance, and still less could they find it in his resolute attitude towards Napoleon. Within four months of his accession to power his vigour was shown in a stroke of policy which did much towards deciding the destiny of England, and to which our history can bring few comparisons in audacity and none in dramatic interest. Since the death of Pitt the power of the French Emperor had increased till it overshadowed all Europe. In March, 1806, he had induced Prussia to declare war against Britain by the cession of Hanover and the menace of immediate war. Within a month he treacherously opened negotiations for peace with Fox, on the basis of the restoration of the Electorate. Fox soon became convinced of his insincerity and renewed the war. In August, the perfidy of Napoleon was revealed to Frederic William of Prussia, whose wrath and suspicions were awakened to the highest degree. He sent the keenest remonstrances to Paris, trusting that diplomacy might avert the threatened war. But the puny arts of the Cabinet of Berlin availed little against a profounder craft, and the lustre which yet gilded the Prussian arms was extinguished on the field of Jena. Napoleon entered Berlin in triumph and announced to the world that he had avenged the defeat of Rossbach, when he carried away the sword which lay upon the tomb of the Great Frederic. The valour and the greatness of Prussia seemed to have been interred in the tomb at Potsdam, and the strongest fortresses were yielded at the first summons to the mere terror of



Napoleon's name. So triumphant a progress increased the demands and the ambitions of a conqueror, whose armies approached the shores of the Baltic within a month from the day of Jena.

Lord Howick, who succeeded Fox as England's Foreign Secretary in September, 1806, had at first been unable to grasp or to interpret the shifting movements which took place upon the continent. Deeply suspicious of a power, whose conduct since 1789 had been consistent only in its perfidy and selfishness, he had not discerned either Prussia's peril or England's opportunity. 'But ministers,' said Canning, 'had begun to see there was something like a war between France and Prussia by the trifling circumstance that the Prussian army was annihilated.' Nor can much praise be given to the military or naval dispositions of this government so overweighted with talent. Expeditions had started for the distant goals of Alexandria, Buenos Ayres and Constantinople, but, as Canning had said, the largest fleet had sailed from the Downs only to make the port of Plymouth, the largest army had been frozen up at Uxbridge. Never would aid have been more effective or more timely than at this moment, when an alliance of the enemies of Napoleon was in the making. The Czar had met the King of Prussia, fallen on his neck, wept over him, and in a fit of sentimental emotion sworn to stand or die by his side. The chivalrous King of Sweden had cast in his lot with an alliance, on which success at first appeared to smile. In February, 1807, the hitherto invincible Napoleon fought a bloody and indecisive action at Eylau, where he lost a large number of men, and a larger portion of fame. Had England now sent strong reinforcements, this advantage might have been pursued and the alliance cemented. Dantzic and Colberg still protracted their heroic resistance, and delivering forces might have struck at the French communications, and even fought a successful rearguard action with the main army. Poetic justice would have been satisfied if the modern Charlemagne had paid for his assumption of the title, by undergoing a defeat equal to that of Roncesvalles.

With every motive for prompt action, Howick still hesitated whilst Napoleon reorganized the forces shattered at Eylau. But Canning had no such doubts, and within a fortnight of his accession to office, had won the Cabinet to his views, and decided to despatch a fleet and an army to the Baltic. But the lack of foresight displayed by the late Ministry was again in evidence. Count Woronzow, who was

at least an impartial witness, wrote on June 26, 1807, to Sir Robert Wilson\*; 'if the expedition of the troops for the continent has been delayed, the fault is not with the actual ministry, as no one here (London) merits the injustice of that blame. Under . . . Pitt there were always about two hundred vessels hired and ready for use as transports . . . there were always regiments prepared to start in a few days. The Foxites sent back (to their owners) the transports hired by Mr. Pitt.' Whilst the lack of transports delayed the expedition, Napoleon advanced to Friedland and ended the campaign by a brilliant victory over the united forces of Prussia and Russia. Peace was inevitable, and on the 25th June, the Czar and Napoleon had their first conference on a raft moored in the Niemen near the town of Tilsit. Alexander was completely hypnotised by the magnetic influence of Napoleon, though not a month before he had spoken of him at a public table as a madman and a tyrant. The treaty of Tilsit was signed in the first week of July, and so abject was the Czar's submission that its secret articles were but sketched out at the interview. A most dangerous power was thus left to Napoleon of completing or evading them according to his own will after his return to Paris. Of these secret provisions, which have recently been discovered and published, one has for us the most transcendent importance:—'If England did not mitigate the severity of her orders in Council, and restore to France her maritime conquests since 1805 by December 1st, the two Emperors agreed to summon the three Courts of Lisbon, Copenhagen, and Stockholm to close their ports to the English and declare war against her, that one of the three courts refusing shall be treated as an enemy.' The whole principle of the treaty was that Russia and France in alliance should endeavour to compass the ruin of England, by putting pressure on neutral states to force them eventually into open war with her.

On November 21st, 1806, Napoleon had inaugurated the famous Continental system by the issue of the Berlin Decree. This forbade all the allies of France to enter into any commercial intercourse with Great Britain and her colonies, and enforced the confiscation of all merchandise of British origin. The immediate effect was to make the attitude of the two neutral and maritime powers of Denmark and Portugal of

\* Brit. Mus., Ad. MS. 30, 147. A. Woronzow was the Russian Ambassador in London.



vital importance. Nelson's great victory at Copenhagen in 1801 had increased the distrust and hatred of Denmark towards England. The Danes had hastened to replace their destroyed fleet, and had conspired at reprisals on British shipping. A report, written by Captain Dunbar in December, 1806, and forwarded to the British Government, directly asserted that the preparations in the Danish docks of transport stores and ships could only be intended for a war with England. This view was, in point of fact, untrue. Canning made careful inquiries on the subject, but assurances did not reach him until too late. The Danish attitude towards Napoleon was also calculated to arouse suspicion, for they made no public protest against the Continental system, but most violently remonstrated against England's declaration that all French ports were in a state of blockade, and that she therefore intended to search all neutral vessels. England's measures were tyrannical enough, but compared to the French decrees, they were mild and just; and Napoleon afterwards declared his intention of treating as an enemy any neutral which allowed England to inflict such outrages upon her vessels. On March 17th, Lord Howick had written to Mr. Rist, the Danish ambassador in London, and declared that, "if Danish neutrality consists in mere assertion and . . . remonstrances against England, and in the most unqualified acquiescence in every extravagant demand of the enemy, . . . the king . . . would take such measures as may be necessary to secure his own honour and his country's welfare against injury, which must necessarily arise from a continuance of such conduct."

In diplomatic language this was almost equivalent to a threat of war. Mr. Rist continued his complaints and on May 26th Canning wrote to Garlike, England's ambassador at Copenhagen, to ascertain if Mr. Rist represented His Government, declared that in the question of right His Majesty would never yield, and that a repetition of Rist's demands would produce his dismissal. Garlike wrote back mentioning the extreme fear of France entertained by Denmark now that Bernadotte and his army were approaching Holstein, and detailing certain rumours of Napoleon's designs. On July 16th Canning wrote instructions to Brook Taylor, who had replaced Garlike, bidding him reassure the Danish minister as to the presence of the British fleet in the Baltic, *as it was not intended as a menace to Denmark*, but merely needful to co-operate with the King of Sweden and protect British



reinforcements. The events of the next few days gave this despatch a singularly ironical turn. On July 22nd, in a despatch marked "most secret," Canning wrote again. "Intelligence reached me yesterday, directly from Tilsit, that at an interview between the Emperor of Russia and Bonaparte on the 24th and 25th of last month, the latter brought forward a proposal for a maritime league against Great Britain, to which the accession of Denmark was represented by Bonaparte to be as certain as it was essential." Canning knew little of the treaty of Tilsit and its secret articles, but had received this report of the conversation on the raft in the Niemen, which embodied their substance. He also believed that the Danish 'naval force was already within the grasp of Bonaparte, and destined by him to convey his invading armies to the shores of Great Britain and Ireland.' With Canning action clung to the skirts of thought. He saw that the promptest decision and the most feverish energy alone could defeat Napoleon's design. King and Cabinet under his influence took a speedy decision, and on July 28th the long delayed expedition set forth under the command of Gambier. The total number of ships had been raised to eighty, and it may safely be said that no more powerful armada ever left our shores. On board was Mr. Jackson, the newly appointed plenipotentiary, who carried in his pocket two alternative proposals of alliance with Denmark. \* England offered to defend Denmark against attack both by sea and land, and to share with her any conquests she might make. But Denmark must hand over her fleet so that it might be completely under British control. England would pay £100,000 for its use during the war, at the close of which she solemnly promised to restore the fleet in a condition equal to that in which she received it. Possession of the fleet was defined as the 'one main indispensable object.' So great was the peril that Canning wrote, 'no time should be lost. . . . and the actual transference of the fleet must take place even before the formal notification of the treaty.'

These last instructions may have hampered Jackson, but he seems to have prematurely disclosed the real object of his mission, and so offered Denmark an alliance at the cannon's mouth. Canning had specially impressed on him his desire 'to spare the feelings as well as the interests of Denmark,' and suggested that if necessary the fleet should be handed over and the treaty concluded *with the appearance of compulsion*, which Denmark might plead as an excuse to

\* Instructions, July 28th, Denmark, F.O., 54, Record Office.

France for this sudden action. "If a sword is drawn or a shot fired," wrote Canning, "It will be a matter of sincere and painful regret to His Majesty." But Jackson employed but little diplomacy or patience believing that the Danish Government were displaying a wilful procrastination. The terms indeed were such as any proud nation would resent, and could only have been arranged by the utmost delicacy and tact. On August 7th the Danish minister denied, with the most violent expressions and gestures, that Bonaparte had made any proposals, and asserted that such a design would at once have been met with a declaration of war. Jackson replied that the quarter, from which the information came, did not admit of its being treated as a mere idle rumour. With an irony that sat better on a parliamentary debater than on an ambassador, he remarked that "had it been His Majesty's wish. . . . the conduct of the court of Denmark throughout the war. . . . and more especially that of its agent (Mr. Rist) in England would have alone been sufficient justification for action." "What then?" broke in Bernstorff dramatically, "because you know that France has the intention of wounding us in the tenderest part, would you struggle with her for the guilty priority and be the first to commit the deed?" But the unmoved Mr. Jackson "begged him to lay aside figures of speech which it was as unfit for me to hear as for you to utter." Subsequently\* the Regent, the Danish Crown Prince, pronounced the proposals contrary to his honour and rendered most offensive by menace, declared that he should lead his troops in person, and that if he fell they would consider his fall as a just debt to his country. But even this appeal failed to shake Mr. Jackson, who retired to the fleet, and entrusted further diplomatic persuasion to the iron lips of cannon. Sir Arthur Wellesley completely defeated the land-forces at Roskilde, and on the 8th September, Copenhagen, bombarded both by land and sea, surrendered at discretion and gave up the ships within her harbour. On October 28th the two fleets, now united under the same flag, passed off Helsingborg, where they saluted England's chivalrous ally, Gustavus, the King of Sweden, amid a scene of unsurpassed magnificence.

Very anxious and weary were the days of expectation

\* Jackson's mission is said to have given rise to George the third's one joke: 'Was the Crown Prince up-stairs or on the ground-floor when he received you,' George the third asked Jackson. 'He was on the ground-floor, so please Your Majesty.' 'I am glad of that for your sake,' replied the sturdy old king, "for if he had had half my spirit he would certainly have kicked you down-stairs."



passed by Canning during August to September. Even the glad tidings of success were balanced by some disadvantages. The 8,000 English troops co-operating with the Swedes in Pomerania had been withdrawn for the purpose of the siege of Copenhagen, and the King of Sweden thus left to cope single-handed against Napoleon. More than this, the terms of capitulation signed at Copenhagen provided that Zealand should be evacuated within six weeks. Dr. Rose holds that this was the real failure of the expedition, that Canning's project had been the formation of a great naval league against France which was rendered impossible by Denmark's attitude.\* But Canning explicitly declares that he had no design of holding Zealand throughout the winter, because the English forces were inadequate. He expressed great annoyance and irritation only because "this article straitens us too much in point of time." A confidential agent of the British Government in his report declares the object of Napoleon to have been to close the Sound, by which peace might be made on terms highly advantageous to Denmark, since the Emperor thought the trade and navigation of the Baltic of more value to Great Britain than her colonies and conquest. This project was now defeated, even though Zealand was evacuated, and though Gustavus would admit no English troops into Sweden to keep a watch over Zealand. "The project of shutting off the Sound," wrote Canning to Pierrepont, "*is become in a great degree an idle threat, after the opportunity which the British navy has now had of exploring the navigation of the Belts.*"

The actual design of Napoleon against Denmark is now proved, but was Denmark merely incapable of resisting Napoleon's demands, or was she in any sense his accomplice? That she was prepared to forsake her commercial neutrality at his bidding seems clear. On July 31, Napoleon instructed Talleyrand to demand that all Danish ports should be closed to England. This would have been but a preface to the handing over of her fleet, though the secret article of Tilsit shows that demand might have been delayed till the end of the year. On August 7, Bernstorff told Jackson that no communications of any kind had come from Napoleon. It is just possible—though unlikely—that the demands had not been formally made, but we know from other sources that in the first fortnight of July the Danish Crown Prince had avowed his intention of closing his ports and abiding by the wishes of France. These views were confidentially disclosed

\* Letter to Boringdon, Sept. 30th, 1807.

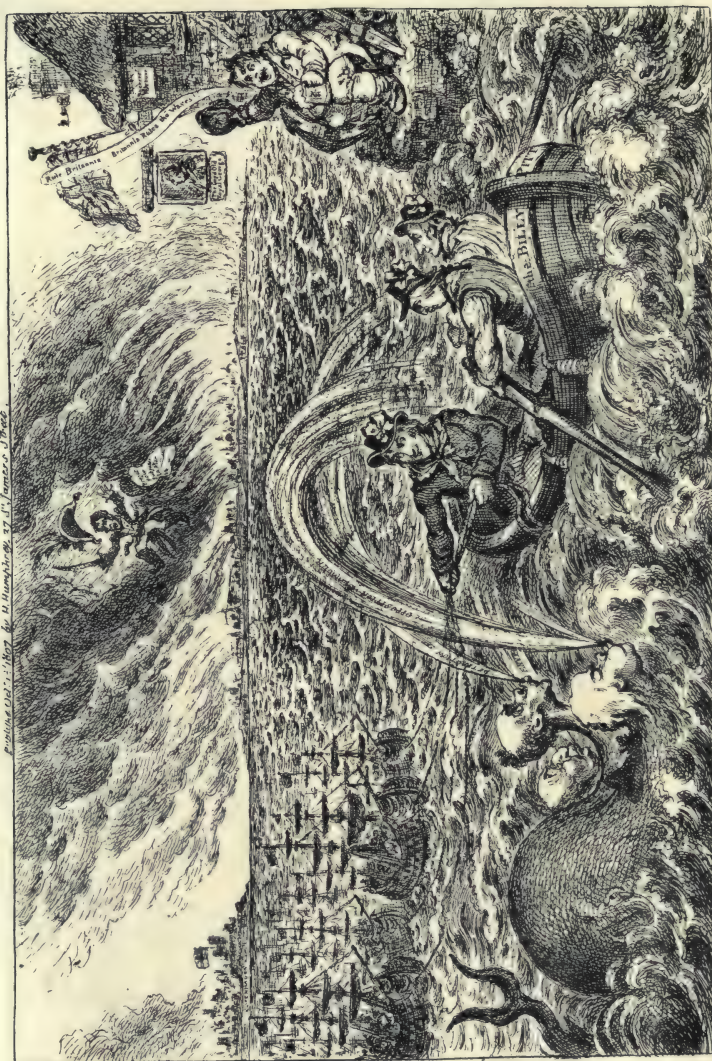




John Bull.

Napoleon

Published by H. W. Langford, 27, St. James's Street.



British Tugs leaving the Danish Fleet into Harbour, - the Broadbottom Leviathan trying to swamp Billy old Bull. Is the latter German interfering in the Affairs of Antislavery? -

Lord St. Vincent.  
Viscount Howick.  
Lord Grenville.

Canning.

Liverpool. Castlereagh.

GILLRAY'S CARICATURE OF THE DANISH EXPEDITION.

by him to Baron Decken and therefore immediately repeated to Pierrepont, our Swedish Ambassador.\* Both he and the King of Sweden at once wrote off to England to demand the speedy despatch of our fleet to the Baltic, and at the same time Garlike wrote from Copenhagen to the same effect. The die had been cast and the fleet launched when these despatches arrived, but incidentally they form the most complete moral justification of the action of Canning.

But contemporaries had not this evidence before them. They saw only an apparently unprovoked attack upon a small and friendly power, which seemed an outrageous violation of international law, as indefensible as the Grand Monarque's occupation of Strasburg or Frederic's seizure of Silesia. Tom Moore represented a common opinion when he wrote,

"If Grotius be thy guide, shut, shut the book  
In force alone for law of nations look  
. . . While Cobbett's pirate code alone appears  
Sound moral sense to England and Algiers."

Even Scott only ventured on indirect praise by making† King Alexander III see an appropriate and prophetic vision in which

"A royal city tower and spire  
Reddened the midnight sky with fire,  
And shouting crews her navy bore  
Triumphant to a further shore."

Gillray alone remained faithful and applauded the exploit in a spirited cartoon.

Sheridan and Howick attacked the Government with the utmost vigour, and pointed with irresistible logic to the millions of shipping, which the unsuspecting Danes had left within English ports. It is true that Canning's information on their state of warlike preparation had been defective. But while in office Lord Howick had brought England and Denmark to the verge of war on this question and that of neutral rights, and his attack was therefore disingenuous. On February 8, 1808, Canning replied to his accusers. The ministry, he said, were called to account not for disaster but success. No envious feelings of comparison could have instigated the

\* These despatches from Pierrepont and Garlike were dated 20th July, (F. O. Sweden 41) and 17th July, Denmark 52). Canning's intelligence from Tilsit reached him 21st July—and the decision was taken in the next two days. Neither of the above-named despatches reached England in time to affect this decision, the one arriving on August 3rd the other on July 31st.

† Marmion, canto. iii-xxiv.



Opposition, as when nothing had been done by one set of men it was impossible to find actions of theirs to compare with what had been done by others. To the absolute accuracy of his information as to Napoleon's designs he pledged his honour, but declared he would rather be condemned unheard than reveal the source of his information. Would it be any satisfaction if we had sunk under the pressure from Bonaparte to have died with our eyes fixed on Puffendorf and the law of nations? Moreover recent parallels to his action could be drawn; England in 1801 occupied Madeira and in 1806 the Talents Ministry had ordered the occupation of Lisbon, in each case to prevent these places from falling into French hands. Extreme necessity justified both these measures and that against Denmark. History has confirmed the truth of Canning's facts, and International Law has vindicated the justice of his actions. On all sides it was admitted that his reply was a masterpiece. Sydney Smith could only say "He leapt about, touched facts with his wand and turned yes into no." Envy here supplied the highest praise, for it admitted that the wand of the enchanter had convinced the audience and secured a great majority.

Had the capture of the Danish fleet an appreciable effect on the political and economic situation? The arm-chair historian avers that the acquisition of twenty ships by the French would not have turned the balance against England, and that in the interests of public morality Canning should have abstained from his attack. He should have allowed England to be wounded, because the weapon which Napoleon meant to turn against us was unlikely to inflict a mortal blow. Even if war and policy depend on these nice numerical calculations, Napoleon's acquisition of the Danish and Portuguese fleets would have made his naval strength almost equal to that of England. But Sydney Smith, the ablest and bitterest of Canning's opponents, unconsciously defends him on this ground. "Napoleon has not ships and sailors to contest the empire of the seas. . . . but there remained quite sufficient of the navies of France. . . . for short excursions and invasions. . . . If any body of French troops land in Ireland, the population will rise against us to a man." The withdrawal of the Danish fleet from Napoleon's eager grasp at least kept the seas of England inviolate and the shores of Ireland uninvaded. It averted the threatened closure of the Sound and enabled English troops to be sent to reinforce Sweden, and 10,000 Spanish troops led by Romana to escape from Napoleon



and be transported to their country. Further, the effect produced upon the Tsar was great; Canning trusted it would "stun Russia into her senses," though with his usual caution and insight he did not build too much on this hope. He pierced through that dissimulation of which the Tsar was so unapproached a master. But the presence of the British fleet in the Baltic at least induced the Tsar to suspend his adoption of the Continental system, and his declaration of war till the extreme close of the year 1807. When we consider the gravity of the crisis, these gains outweigh any disadvantages. It has often been supposed that during the first half of 1807 the Continental system was not seriously enforced in the Baltic. Yet Lord Howick had sternly remonstrated because of the enormous smuggling trade carried on by Denmark in the interests of France. Fenwick wrote to Canning from Sleswick a fortnight after the fall of Copenhagen describing the events of the year.\* "Discontent is great and just approaching to poverty. . . . Prices of English manufactured goods and colonial produce are risen more than 100% but their importation is almost impossible." Relief soon came and† sugar, coffee, cocoa, tobacco and other colonial products, with British bales of cloth and cotton, were put under the Prussian flag, and exported in large quantities to France and Holland. The dues, which Denmark had extracted from every ship which entered the Sound, were also abolished. The English occupation of Heligoland facilitated, and the presence of the British fleet almost compelled at the cannon's mouth, a general system of smuggling in favour of England throughout the Baltic ports.

The danger from which Canning had delivered England in the case of Denmark threatened her also in the direction of Portugal. On July 19th Napoleon informed the Portuguese ambassador at Paris that his country must close its ports to English commerce. He burst into paroxysms of rage when he heard of the seizure of the Danish fleet, and in Canning's words "found himself, to his infinite surprise no doubt, constituted the professor and upholder of international law." But his methods were in no sense academic, for he concealed his previous negotiations with Portugal and declared that, in consequence of the English abuse of international rights, "he was compelled to compensate himself by attacking Portugal!" The whole course of action illustrates the violence and impolicy of Bonaparte and the vigour of Canning. It is a priceless com-

\* Denmark F. O. 56.     † Prussia, F. O. 77, Consul's Report.

ment on Canning's Danish policy that\* Bonaparte "in a dictatorial tone, suitable to Charlemagne among the princes of whom he was suzerain lord, made at the court of Portugal this singular demand ;—closure of all its ports to British vessels, detention of all English residents, and seizure of all British property in Portugal." The Portuguese Regent was sorely frightened, and after some delay yielded the first demand, but felt it inconsistent with his honour to yield the other two. The Spanish and French ambassadors were instructed to leave on September 1st, in case of refusal, and without waiting for a reply Bonaparte coolly seized all Portuguese vessels in French ports. Early in† September Canning wrote a despatch to Souza, urging that Bonaparte's evident intention was not to distress but to annihilate Great Britain, and that these demands on Portugal were but part of a system to enslave and subject all neutrals to France. Accordingly acts or preparations of hostility might find "Great Britain under the hard necessity of first overpowering them (the neutral states) as enemies, with the purpose of hereafter re-establishing them as independent States." He was willing temporarily to overlook the closing of the ports, but he saw too plainly the designs of Bonaparte to hesitate. On October 22nd a treaty of mutual alliance and defence was signed between Canning and Souza, the Portuguese ambassador in England, and it was arranged that the Portuguese court should seek refuge in Brazil. A large English convoy had already left Portugal, and Junot with a French army was advancing from Bayonne by forced marches to seize the Portuguese fleet. The Regent still hesitated, and proposed through Souza the plan of a "nominal war" against England. Canning rejected it with disdain, remarking that this would be to enlist all neutrals on the side of France. On November 6th he resolved to bring matters to a crisis and wrote to Sir Sidney Smith, who commanded a British squadron at the mouth of the Tagus. His instructions were that, if the Regent still refused to ratify the Convention and the ports still remained closed, and if more British goods were confiscated, he was to institute the most rigorous blockade. It was only to cease on the surrender of the Portuguese fleet, which he should promise to restore at the end of the war. If this was refused he was to seize and destroy every Portuguese ship that came his way. On November 24th this blockade began, and so

\* Proclamation of Prince Regent from Brazil, 1st May, 1808. Portugal F. O. 63.

† Portugal F. O. 56 for all these papers.



effective was its institution that the Prince Regent at length capitulated. He dropped down the Tagus with a fleet of thirty-six sail under the escort of the British squadron, just as Junot entered his capital. It is clear that only the promptest measures and most vigorous energy could have succeeded in thus foiling the schemes of Napoleon, and in persuading the timid and wavering Regent to\* "convey to the New World the hopes and fortunes of the Portuguese Monarchy, and the means of founding it anew in augmented strength and splendour." The Portuguese fleet of thirteen sail and fourteen frigates was now withdrawn from any danger of contact with Napoleon, Nelson destroyed nearly twenty men-of-war at Trafalgar. Canning obtained over thirty from Denmark and Portugal. This episode is in reality one of the most important of the time, and has only been obscured by the greater notoriety of the Danish expedition. The French invasion of Spain, which followed quickly upon that of Portugal, had equally momentous effects. Henceforward South and Central America both refused to acknowledge Napoleon's interference with their mother countries, opened their ports to the goods of England, and relieved her from the strain of the Continental system. The necessity of opening up fresh markets in these directions had been foreseen by Canning in 1806, who had for that reason praised the expedition to Buenos Ayres.

An extract from a despatch to Lord Strangford,† just at the period of most anxious expectation, will show Canning's view of the Continental system. "If ever the period should arrive," wrote he, "which the rashness and fury of Bonaparte is hastening, and to which the shutting of the ports of Portugal is one main step,—when Great Britain being excluded from all Continental intercourse, by the willing or the forced consent of the Governments of Europe, should cease to feel any common interest in them, and should treat them all as one common enemy—the nations who now flatter themselves that they are the most necessary to her existence, who fancy that their commerce is one of the main springs of her power, would perhaps be the first to feel that that power is not created by foreign commerce, though the use of it is mitigated and controlled by the relations of Great Britain with the Continent, that this country has in itself *in its own consumption and its own colonies* ample means of self-existence; and that in her intercourse with other nations she bestows more benefit than she receives,

\* To Souza, Sept. 1807, undated.

† Oct. 22, 1807. Canning to S. Portugal F. O. 56.

even when that intercourse is supposed to be most beneficial and most studiously regulated in her favour.' This is the argument from the English or maritime point of view, which historians have often carried to excess in order to denounce the Continental system as economically unsound and insane. But there are other aspects to the question; at its worst this policy only set the wealth of a continent against that of an island, trusting that the latter would be the first to be beggared. At its best it was a link and consolidation of the Napoleonic Empire, and offered an unrivalled means of developing manufactures behind its barrier. Napoleon may have thought the total destruction of our export trade would prove the ruin of this country, but the comparatively small bulk and enormous market value of our textile goods eventually made smuggling the most profitable of all trades. It brought about the climax of absurdity when Napoleon was compelled to connive at the introduction of British woollens into North Germany to clothe his soldiers for the Russian Campaign.

Wellington and Nelson have had their full meed of fame for defeating Napoleon, but the humbler figures of Crompton and Cartwright, clad though they be in humble drab and fustian, may claim their share. It was their ingenuity which gave us a monopoly of manufactured goods throughout the world, whilst at the same time our corn supply was sufficiently great to make us largely self-sufficing in food. Our most real danger was in fact from the neutrals, for as long as England ruled the seas, a genuine and uninterrupted neutral trade really served France. Even the most tyrannical exercise of search-rights could not prevent much damage being wrought to England, and smuggling, as we have seen, was also carried on to our detriment in neutral vessels. The real truth is that neither opponent in the gigantic duel felt he could allow a third party to remain neutral. But Napoleon's attempts to force neutrals into open hostility displayed little of his usual foresight, and this was not only because neutral trade on the whole benefited France. Our vexatious interferences and the extreme violence of\* our Order in Council of November, 1807,

\* All parts of France to be in a state of blockade—and ships of all nations to be good prize—unless they touched English shores. Canning has always borne the blame of this order. In point of actual fact he had seriously remonstrated against its continuance as early as the end of 1808. See a letter from George Rose in reply to his protest. Dec. 2nd, 1808. Portugal F.O. 67. George Rose was 'the Father of the Orders in Council.'



might have produced a declaration of war from Portugal and Denmark, who both greatly resented it, as it eventually did from the United States. The apparent harshness of Canning's master-stroke against Denmark for once placed on Napoleon's side the shadow of public opinion and morality. But he at once exchanged for it the substance of neutrality, by forcing Portugal into the arms of Great Britain on the hypocritical plea of retaliation. A little delay or a little judicious sympathy would have produced the result he desired and perhaps have changed the fortunes of the great struggle.

But these reflections on the neutral trade must not blind us to the great importance of England's undisputed command of the sea, in rendering the Continental system impossible. "Even if the ship is sinking . . . it is our duty to struggle against the boisterous elements; but I can never acknowledge that such is our state; we are riding proudly and nobly, buoyant on the waves." So spoke Canning on January 31st, 1809. If England's navies indeed rode triumphant on every sea that result was secured in the main by three events and three men, by Earl St. Vincent's profound and masterly strategy in the blockade of the French coasts, by Nelson's supreme victory at Trafalgar, and by the seizure of the Danish and Portuguese fleets in 1807. For the last exploits it is certain that whatever of glory may cling to them in history will be given to the bold spirit and impetuous energy which planned and secured their success.

The vigour of Canning was equally shown in his attitude to other nations. He had clearly seen through the selfish policy of both Austria and Prussia, and knew that their refusal to unite against Napoleon was caused by their jealousy of one another. This Pitt had never grasped, and hence the failure of his subsidy policy, of which Canning had even in his lifetime expressed disapproval. A truer attitude was laid down in a great speech by Fox, which—adopted by the Talents Ministry—forms their one valuable contribution to Foreign Policy. Their principle was not to raise up half hearted and suspicious coalitions, but to give effective aid to states declaring war against Napoleon of their own free-will and choice. Canning adopted this policy to the full and sent £250,000 to Austria when she declared war in 1809, a measure clearly taken without aggressive purpose. Also whilst sending money to Prussia he refused to conclude a formal treaty of

subsidy. He defines his policy in a letter to\* Sir Jacobi Kloest. "It would appear to make the efforts of Prussia for her own salvation dependent wholly upon external aid; and to represent her attempts to repel the invader as the results not of an indignant spirit of patriotism and an unconquerable determination to retrieve the honour of the Prussian arms, but of the stipulations of a subsidiary convention.' He objected to rendering to a nation assistance, which did not inspire and awake the energies of the Government and people it protected. In this spirit he wrote to Souza † "the British Government will not be wanting in furnishing the means of exertion to Portugal. It will only require to be assured that such exertions will be really made! The mode, the extent and distribution of forces and munitions of war would depend entirely upon the activity of the Portuguese Government.' He thus early recognized and foretold that the chief hope of Napoleon's overthrow lay in the awakening of the spirit of nationalism against his universal supremacy.

The great conqueror who covered whole kingdoms at a stride, whose path was marked by the desolation of empires and the dismemberment of States, now turned to the only unconquered part of West Europe. It was not only, as most Englishmen think, that desire to enforce the Continental system caused him to lay aside his yet vaster dreams of oriental conquest and to invade the Spanish peninsula. There was a strong French party in Spain, and the prescriptive rights and age-long glories of Spanish royalty threatened—and as it were mocked—the upstart empire of France which adjoined it. Hence arose alike Napoleon's aggressions, and the revolt of the Spanish people. Canning was one of the first to perceive the advantages of a vigorous prosecution of war in Spain, and with Wellesley the first to dream that Napoleon was not invincible. 'Was it then,' ‡ he asked indignantly when urging the continuance of the Spanish war, "that there was something fatal in the will and irresistible in the power of Bonaparte; was the world to submit to his tyrannous resolves as to those

\* Prussia F.O. 77. Record Office, v; also an unsigned article 'Austrian State Papers,' Quarterly, No. 2, May, 1809, by Sharon Turner and Canning—in which his policy is most admirably sketched. Among other matters the revolt of Prussia is foretold.

† Portugal F.O. 67, Nov. 18.

‡ Feb. 28th, 1809.



of a Divine infliction?" To others the expeditions to Spain and Portugal were identical with the descents on Buenos Ayres, Alexandria, Sicily or Walcheren. Canning from the first decided to defend Portugal and make it the basis of an attempt to vanquish France in Spain, and counted on the success of the national uprisings. Napoleon admitted the success of this policy when he said at St. Helena "the Spanish ulcer destroyed me," and when he kept writing to his generals in Spain\* "nothing matters except the English." In June, 1808, the deputies from the Asturias arrived and requested aid against Napoleon. On June 15th, Canning made the following declaration of policy in the Commons; "We shall proceed upon the principle that any nation of Europe that starts up to oppose a power . . . the common enemy of all nations, whatever be the existing political relations of that nation, it becomes instantly our essential ally." He would, he said, send aid to Spain even if her armies were led by the Grand Inquisitor himself. Sir Arthur Wellesley was at once despatched to Spain with a force, which landed in Portugal, and won the first of his many victories at Vimiera. The triumph was marred by the Convention of Cintra, which allowed Junot and the French army to evacuate Portugal without molestation. Wellesley was unfortunately over-ruled, despite remonstrance, by the presence of two senior officers Sir H. Burrard and Sir Hew Dalrymple, who had succeeded him in the chief command. When the Convention was ratified by the Cabinet Canning refused to be present, by way of marking his disapproval. At the same time he showed the greatest consideration towards the unfortunate Wellesley, and steadily defended both his foresight and qualifications for command.

Canning's mortification at this unhappy arrangement was extreme, and it blazed out into angry fire, when Souza addressed to him a despatch demanding "reparation" for the Convention of Cintra. It was indeed overpowering that the Portuguese Minister should presume to censure the English for having compelled the French to evacuate his country. A heated correspondence ensued in which Canning had the best of the argument, which was complicated with further information from Portugal. Finally Canning wrote a despatch to Souza—which is probably unique in British diplomacy.† "I send you the answer which you wished to

\* See also Sorel vi, 330.

† Dec. 11, 1808. Portugal F.O. 67.

have to your letter of the 1st inst., and to which your letter of the 5th (being the "explication explicative") with a head and a tail to it is a reply. This completes the series of a correspondence from the like of which Heaven defend all future Secretaries and Foreign Ministers though you and I have survived it." He ended by declaring that he would send the whole or none of the correspondence for approval to the Prince-Regent in Brazil. Souza submitted and wrote on 20th December to Mr. Hammond (Under-Secretary), "I assure you that no man can be more disgusted with the passed correspondence than I am, and God may pardon him who is the cause of it. *Sir Hew, Sir Hew*, you have much indeed to account for."

In September, 1808, Sir John Moore, who had hitherto served under Sir Hew Dalrymple, was appointed to command an army which should advance to Madrid. Moore was a capable officer in the field but a man by nature despondent. His position was rendered more difficult by the presence of Frere, who was plenipotentiary to the Spanish Cortes. Frere pressed him to advance to the relief of Madrid, but \*Moore still hesitated perplexed by "Castlereagh's plausible verbose nonsense" and "his inability to grasp our system." On December 10th, 1808, like a sword cleaving through all the tangled criss-cross and chaos of threads, came a despatch from Canning to Frere. "There must be no retreat on Portugal, the army must act on a settled plan. It must be united and called the British army, great confusions having arisen among the natives from its having different titles, "Moore's army—Wellesley's army," etc.—and Frere must

\* The boldness of Moore's subsequent move should not blind us to his previous indecision and hesitation.

There is a story given by Stapleton—that Moore said to Castlereagh when appointed to command in September 'I protest against the expedition and foretell its failure.' When Canning heard this at the Cabinet, he exclaimed, 'Good God—and you really mean to say you allowed a man with such views to have command of the expedition.' It is now clear from Sir Frederick Maurice's valuable *Diary of Moore*, ii. 269, that Moore's words were applied to an expedition sent out in July.

Canning therefore meant—you allowed a man with such views in July to have command in September. This in no way relieves Moore from the charge of constitutional despondency or impatience of control. It did not become an officer to protest against the July expedition, because he was third in command and it fully justifies Canning's remark. Maurice gives a letter which Moore wrote to the War Office in 1798—protesting against his commanding officer and requesting to be recalled from Ireland as revolt was imminent !



receive a clear exposition of the system on which the Spaniards intended to conduct the war." Canning thus suggested Moore's junction with Baird, which was the prelude to the famous enterprise. On December 21st Moore prepared to strike at the French communications at Sahagun, a move which forced Napoleon hastily to recall his forces, and which ended in the far-famed retreat to Corunna, and the death of Moore himself. Canning declared that "every operation of the campaign had proved glorious for the character of the British army. If we had been obliged to quit Spain we had left that country with fresh laurels blooming on our brows." The effect was indeed decisive; no army can be suddenly turned from its objective, and compelled to undertake forced marches at terrific speed, without injuring its character and deranging every plan. The south of Spain was relieved and Portugal protected, though Moore himself imagined, with sublime illogicality, that his expedition would be attended by no other advantage than "the character it would attach to the British arms."

But the cost was great, Moore's forces had suffered terribly, and had in addition been forced to embark for England. The public sought a victim and with an unreflecting chivalry passed over the hero, who had sunk to rest on the field of glory, and fixed on the unfortunate Frere. Military and political officers do not often act well together, and Moore had given little information to the home authorities and had quarrelled with Frere. The latter had at least been largely responsible for the Spanish resistance to Napoleon. By his measures he had secured the safe convoy of 10,000 Spanish troops from Denmark to Spain, under the leadership of Romana, afterwards the soul of the Spanish revolt. The Spaniards made him a marquis, but the cries of the English public enforced his dismissal. Canning generously defended him and did not shrink from pointing out\* the defects of Moore, whose military judgment certainly compares badly with that of Wellesley. The former declared Portugal could under no circumstances be defended against the French, the

\* Thus occasioning the lines :—

'Lightly they'll talk of the spirit that's gone,  
And o'er his cold ashes upbraid him ;'

It is perhaps worthy of remark that if Moore himself suffered from detractors after death he wantonly attacked others during his life-time. His diary is full of petulant or venomous denunciations of Hood, Sidney Smith, and Wellesley, three of the ablest officers who ever adorned either our naval or military service.

latter avowed that it could, and proved his case. Canning again faced unpopularity, when he insisted on the appointment of Wellesley to supreme command in Portugal, in face of opposition both in public and in the Cabinet. "My opinion alone was the cause of the continuance of the war in the Peninsula," he said afterwards to Stapleton. Early in 1809 a treaty was concluded with the Junta by which each party promised to make no separate peace. Sir Arthur Wellesley soon rewarded Canning's confidence by the passage of the Douro and the victory of Talavera, and Lord Wellesley, despatched as Plenipotentiary, helped by diplomatic means to strengthen the British position. Canning supplied Sir Arthur Wellesley with all the reinforcements he could, though at this time he did not desire too large an army as supplies were insufficient. Unlike Perceval's Ministry, which in later years more than once told Wellington that the whole blame of failure must rest on his head, Canning gloried in assuming full responsibility. "I discharged the glorious duty," said he, Apr. 30th, 1823, "of recognizing without delay the rights of the Spanish people. . . . It was indeed a stirring, a kindling time; and no man who has a heart in his bosom can think even now of the noble enthusiasm, the undaunted courage, the unconquerable exertions of the Spaniards in a cause apparently desperate finally so triumphant—without feeling his blood glow and his pulses quicken with tumultuous throbs of admiration."

Meanwhile Castlereagh, who was War Minister, agreed as little with Canning as Moore with Frere. Both were men of strong character, energy and ability, but the duties of each were badly defined, and there was a constant clash between authorities. Castlereagh was able and hard-working, but even his purely military administration was not a success and he had not Canning's larger political views. A few instances will show his lack of consideration for his colleague. The Spanish Junta or provisional government was jealous of the introduction of English troops into their strong places. Frere had with great difficulty lulled their fears, and was hoping to induce them to request an English garrison for Cadiz. Suddenly an agent of Castlereagh's arrived to arrange for the landing of an English force at Cadiz, without having made any previous communication with Frere or Canning. The confusion, jealousy and suspicion thus occasioned can be imagined. Castlereagh had most of the Cabinet on his side and the authority of special military knowledge. Against Canning's wishes he enforced the agreement to



the Convention of Cintra, insisted on sending 12,000 troops to Sicily instead of reinforcing Portugal, and advocated the\* disastrous Walcheren expedition. Such incidents will explain why in April, 1809, Canning approached the Premier and demanded "a change in Castlereagh's department or mine." He suggested not that Castlereagh should leave the ministry, but that he should have another office. He accused him not of incompetency but of incompatibility, and declared there must be a new distribution of business between the War and Foreign Offices. Portland agreed with Canning's views and declared he would consult with his friends. Being naturally timid and afraid of giving offence, as well as suffering from a terrible internal complaint, his negotiations were delayed. The real cause of offence was Lord Camden, who was the uncle of Castlereagh, and who had offered to resign the presidency of the council in his favour. But he showed no desire to give up the seals at once, or to acquaint Castlereagh with the decision. On July 12th, Canning heard of the concealment and made the keenest remonstrances. Portland worn with disease and care replied that the concealment had originated with himself, and that he would bear the blame. The necessity of getting the King to agree to the changes prolonged the negotiations and the silence. On the 6th September Canning heard, to his horror, that Portland and Castlereagh's friends had not yet revealed to him the proposed changes. Canning at once resigned "rather than enforce the intended change."†

Castlereagh now for the first time heard from his supposed friends of the negotiations. He imagined in his indignation that Canning had demanded his exclusion from the ministry on the ground of incompetency, and yet had for six months

\* Canning's attitude to this expedition was that he did not approve of it, but that his disapproval was not sufficiently strong to oppose it. Wellesley thought the plan good but the execution lamentable. He would have welcomed a small reinforcement but could not have fed a fresh army of 40,000 on the devastated land of Portugal.

† Sir Fred. Maurice puts faith in a rumour, which had no credence even at the time—that Canning proposed to "give up Moore" and that Castlereagh nobly answered by a bullet! This is contrary to all the known evidence, and is directly contradicted by the statements and conduct of Castlereagh himself. In any case the internal evidence of Canning's character would dismiss so extraordinary a charge. But even if we put all this aside we may be assured that any slander, which Walcot and Lady Ann Hamilton do not venture to assert about him, can have no foundation in fact or even in plausible fiction.

after the demand sat in the same Cabinet with him, and even allowed him to conduct the Walcheren expedition. Such misconceptions had a serious result, for the hot-blooded Castlereagh at once sent a challenge which Canning as rashly accepted. Ministers in those days, like Hungarian premiers of to-day, often had to defend their offices at the pistol's mouth. Pitt fought with Tierney, Wellington with Winchelsea, Peel thought of calling out Disraeli. But for colleagues to fight one another was an unheard of scandal. The two pupils of Pitt met on Putney Heath, and fought, with a certain grim irony, in full view of the house where the master had died. The first discharge was harmless, as a contemporary rhyme said :

‘For Doodle hit not Noodle grave,  
And Noodle's shot at Doodle brave  
Whisked by right harmlessly.’

At the second Canning shot a button off Castlereagh's coat and, though wounded in the thigh, firmly stood his ground. The principals were preparing to fire again when the seconds saw blood flowing from the wound and interfered. Subsequently a complete reconciliation was effected between the two. Canning's action was much criticized, and he acquired from this incident a reputation for\* intriguing of which henceforth he could never divest himself. Yet on a fair review of the question he can hardly be much blamed ; the real causes of the quarrel were the vacillation of Portland and Camden. Of treachery or intrigue it is as impossible to accuse Canning on a full knowledge of the facts, as it would be on the less certain presumption of his character. Sir Walter Scott, the soul of chivalry and honour, who knew nothing of political exigencies, pronounced the conduct of Canning to have been blameless throughout these transactions.

That a personal quarrel should thus have withdrawn from the Ministry its ablest member was a national calamity. From this time dated all Canning's personal misfortunes, from this time dated the feebleness of the support afforded to Wellington, though before he left office Canning had fortun-

\* The affair was much discussed in the papers. Lord Camden published a somewhat disingenuous explanation to which Canning replied with much skill. Canning's case was much damaged by the almost immediate death of the Duke of Portland. Henceforward not only was the most responsible person unable to give any explanation, but from delicacy of feeling Canning refused to make any statement which could attribute blame to the dead.



ately and irrevocably engaged England's honour in that Spanish struggle, "whence issued the deliverance of Europe." By rejecting Napoleon's overtures at Erfurt, on the ground that Spain was still under his domination, Canning showed his cosmopolitan spirit and demonstrated that the restoration of Hanover was not the sole object of British Policy. A purely insular policy would in fact have been impracticable and would have proved the destruction of England. The commercial tactics brought about the ruin of Napoleon, and had Canning stayed in office his remonstrances might have secured the repeal of the Orders in Council and so averted the American war. Some declared his policy rash and violent, a charge not well supported by the facts now known, but none could deny the vigour and the boldness of its conceptions. On June 14th, 1809, Sir Walter Scott wrote of how Canning despised the half measures of his colleagues in the Cabinet. "It is not his fault that the cause of Spain is not at this moment triumphant. This I know, and there will come a time when the world will know it too." Perhaps that day has at length arrived, or is it yet delayed? In England time alone can weave the laurel of the hero or compose the halo of the saint. When another century has passed Canning may be reckoned with Danton or Cromwell as one in whom, "when she had died out among all other men, Hope still shone as a pillar of fire." The sinking hearts of his countrymen were roused by his fervid appeals and his indignant eloquence. As \* he said with quiet self-restraint of his conduct during this time, "True it was that clouds and darkness occasionally gathered on the horizon; but even through those clouds and through that darkness, I saw, or fondly fancied I saw, a ray of light which promised to pierce the gloom, and which might hereafter lighten the nations."

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NOTE—WHO WAS IT?

No account of the Danish Expedition would be complete without an attempt to discover the true source of Canning's information. Stapleton declares that the intelligence came from a man, who listened behind a curtain to the colloquy between Napoleon and the Czar on the raft at Tilsit. The personality of this man is as mysterious as that of Junius or the wearer of the Iron Mask. He is supposed to have been one Mackenzie, an English spy, and a tradition in this man's

\* 16th April, 1816.

family declares he was concealed on the raft. Stapleton's account has been declared dramatic and fictitious, but Mitchell lends additional testimony. "I have spoken with an English person who saw the interview at Tilsit,"\* he writes from Elsingoer on July 11, "he described the conversation of both parties to have been very animated and that they seemed very cordial to one another." Though Stapleton is thus vindicated the really important fact is that Canning's refusal to reveal his source of information as well as † certain of his expressions, seem to indicate that an exalted personage communicated the more essential part of the intelligence. Opinion has long hesitated between Talleyrand and Bennigsen. But Bennigsen was not suspected by Sir Robert Wilson, who even supplied him with important information. Wilson knew much of the secret history of the time and has himself been supposed, not without reason, to have disclosed the secrets of Tilsit to Canning. But Talleyrand is a more probable person. He knew he was about to be dismissed, and ‡ he openly disapproved of Napoleon's treatment of Prussia and Portugal. Remembering his secret intrigues with Malmesbury at Lisle, what more likely than that he is the source of the intelligence? A passage in § Fouché's Memoirs declares Napoleon believed this to be the case. We know now that these memoirs are not authentic, and though it was always clear that they had many absurd blunders Canning and Liverpool thought they were genuine. Stapleton showed the passage in question to Canning, who smilingly accepted it as a justification for his policy. This is more than significant: it is conclusive. It indicates Talleyrand as the true source and explains (what is

\* Denmark F.O. 56. Dates allow this person to be Mackenzie.

† "Sir Robert Wilson, Life," II. 283, writes he had accurate accounts of the Tilsit interview on June 26th. Hence Mackenzie's information would have been communicated before July 21st. On July 22nd Canning wrote to Brook-Taylor "intelligence reached me yesterday directly from Tilsit about the designs of Bonaparte." Dr. Rose seems to omit this in his calculations, for here is clearly implied one authoritative source, which of course only confirmed all the other rumours. On July 3rd and 15th Jackson acknowledges the receipt of important intelligence (Prussia, F. O. 75. Life, II. 173)—the former news could have reached England in time.

Jackson first told Bernstorff that "the quarter from which his information was received did not admit of its being treated as a mere idle rumour," and then mentions *other* sources. Denmark F.O. 54.

‡ Lettres inédites de Talleyrand, p. 476. He was removed on Aug. 8th.

§ p. 214, edn. 1892. English Translation.



otherwise incomprehensible) how two men so acute and so learned in state secrets as Canning and Liverpool could be duped into believing the Memoirs to be authentic.

Besides the intelligence direct from Tilsit, Canning had many other sources of information, though none so decisive or convincing. Of these one came from \* the Regent of Portugal, others were rumours from the Paris papers, or intelligence from private individuals, ambassadors and consular agents. But though he must have already received Mackenzie's report and heard most of these other rumours, Canning remained indecisive till the news of July 21st, when he at once took action, convinced by this last piece of intelligence that all the rest was true. One more possibility remains, for the intelligence of the 21st may have come from Tilsit to the Danish or some other ambassador in England.† Letters coming to foreign ambassadors were at this time usually opened and deciphered, and the authenticity of the information thus obtained could not have been doubted. But, as far as can be gathered, the most probable explanation of the facts is this. ‡ There was a man on the raft who communicated some intelligence to the British Government, but his information was supplemented by the more valuable disclosures of a high official. This was probably Talleyrand, but, whoever it was, his information at once cleared away all Canning's doubts and proved the truth of all the rumours and assertions. The actual question as to whether the information was genuine or not, so long doubted and disputed by contemporaries, was settled half a century after Canning had been laid in the grave, when the publication of the secret articles of Tilsit more than confirmed and justified his action.

\* Malmesbury IV. 391. His information on this period—as shown by our MSS. Records—is singularly accurate. So this, though unlikely, may be true.

From an article in the Quarterly, No. 2, May, 1809, by Canning, we gather that he attached much importance to rumours in France on the subject of the Danish project.

‡ v. Espy. Yonge's Life of Liverpool, I. 239. Foreign powers got to find them out, and Souza's brother used to write letters to him not in Portuguese but in French, in order that the English Government might more easily decipher them.

† The man on the raft may have been Mackenzie. But he was not the authoritative source. He knew nothing of the treaty of Tilsit, and brought no new information after July 4th, and did not arrive in England till July 23rd. v. Private letters of 1st Earl Malmesbury, p. 27.

## CHAPTER VI

### CANNING'S POLITICAL CREED

WITH little direct influence upon foreign affairs during the years 1810-22, Canning's thoughts naturally bent towards domestic policy. Despite his change from the Whiggism of his youth it may be affirmed, without fear of dispute, that there is no great English statesman whose early ideas were maintained with more, or even with equal persistence. Time only deepened and strengthened the convictions formed in 1792-3, and served to display alike his consistency and his foresight. To the last he was a Tory with liberal ideas, of the school of Pitt, though unlike his master he never modified his opinions whilst actually in office. His attitude towards the Constitution will serve to illustrate both his personal opinions and his conceptions of statesmanship. The Englishman abhors novelty so much in his pet institutions, that every reformer has to pretend he is restoring some primeval excellence to the British Constitution. Hence the spectacle to-day which amuses the cynic and deceives the populace, where the carefully preserved forms of the fourteenth conceal the workings of the forces of the twentieth century. The bigotry of some of the Tories of Canning's time strains belief and mocks at imagination. They had all the sluggishness of Walpole, without his shrewdness and desire to conciliate the people. As Sydney Smith said wittily enough, "Lord Eldon would not consent to the revolutionary proposition that two and two make four, without sighs and tears, scruples and protestations and appeals to heaven." General Gascoyne declared not only that the slave trade ought to exist, but that if it had never existed, it would now be necessary to invent it for the good of society. Wellington thought the return of the Whigs to office more dangerous than a French invasion. To these ponderous politicians any change was fraught with ruin and danger.



Such was the effect of the French Revolution, of its wild theories and wilder practice, upon the minds of many Englishmen. Canning yielded to none in his opposition to French principles, and even despised the undoubted benefits they had secured by sweeping away feudal abuses and establishing social and legal equality. But greatly to the credit of his wisdom and intelligence he perceived a fact unsuspected by most Tories, that no government however excellent could exist by a policy of mere inaction, stagnation and repression. Airy and unsubstantial theories might indeed be cast aside, but the application of generous and liberal principles was not to be rejected, if their foundations lay in truth, because their danger lay in excess. "They, who resist indiscriminately all improvements as innovations, may find themselves compelled to submit to innovations, although they are not improvements." These are the words of a true statesman and in fact outlined the only conditions on which Toryism could continue its existence or development.

To grasp an idea of our institutions before and after 1832 is to conceive the world during and after a Glacial Age. The Constitution like the earth was bound in icy and immovable bonds, till the liberating waters were unsealed. To realise the mental attitude of Eldon or Gascoyne is an almost equal effort of imagination. Canning himself hoped never to see the day when England would become "a democracy inlaid with a peerage and topped with a crown." The great Reform Bill did more than any single event to achieve this end, to shift the balance of the Constitution, and to revolutionise our conceptions of its principles. In the eyes of Burke, Pitt and Blackstone, the old British Constitution was the masterpiece of human wisdom just because it was not what it now is, a democracy with aristocratic and monarchic infusions. On the contrary it contained and harmonised within itself the three principles of government—monarchy, aristocracy and democracy, each balancing and restraining the other. Each branch was independent in its allotted department, and equal with regard to the other two, whose evils and excesses it helped to check. Foreigners from Montesquieu to Voltaire, with an even less discerning eye, raved over the ideal beauties and technical perfections of our Constitution. It was the Sacred Ark of Liberty treasuring the Political Decalogue on tablets more enduring than stone. This extravagance found its climax in Delolme, whose work on the Constitution remained a classic for half a century. It was in vain that Rousseau

scoffed at our system, rejected all existing governments and put his faith in republics. The ludicrous and bloody attempts of his followers to establish the rule of peace and love only led Englishmen to cling more tightly to the abuses of our Constitution, in the belief that they were its blessings.

Canning accepted the old constitutional theory and gave it a practical meaning. If the king was to be a power in the state he must not govern solely by influence, but must have a recognised orbit of his own. Hence within a limited range Canning supported the personal government of the king, and attached great weight to the royal desires and opinions. Thus he would not join the Talents Ministry, because "Lord Grenville had selected him individually and without the king's previous knowledge." A government could not be all it ought to be for weight and authority, popularity and confidence, "unless the king were admitted into it. He must know of any proposed modification, must approve the design and be seen in the execution. To your neglect of this principle," wrote Canning to Grenville "is to be traced the indisposition felt to the Government throughout the country." In the same spirit he attacked the Limited Service Bill, because it deprived the crown of privileges in favour of Parliament, and for the same reason he was opposed to all statutory restrictions on the power of the Regent. He saw clearly enough that until the reign of George the third—in contradiction to constitutional theory—the Peers had held the main influence. While they captured the rotten boroughs and made pensioners of the Commons, the members of the Lower House and the king had sunk into the background, and the people had been disregarded. George the third, by his skilful intrigues and immovable obstinacy, had won a victory over the proud Whig nobles alike in 1784 and 1807. In each case the people as a whole welcomed the change and applauded the sovereign. The Crown still held great influence through its many Government boroughs and extensive patronage, neither of which were as yet completely in the hands of ministers. Canning saw that the power of the Crown could be used as a direct and effective check upon that of the nobles; and on occasion be united with that of the independent members of parliament, and with the people to oppose aristocratic pretensions, for the good of the nation at large. "I think," said he, June 11th, 1812, "that in the very best spirit of the constitution the Crown has exclusively the appointment of ministers subject to the control and advice of a free



Parliament." "I have never deemed it reasonable," he said on another occasion, "that any confederacy of great names should monopolise to themselves the whole patronage and authority of the State, should constitute themselves as it were into a corporation, a bank for circulating the favours of the House and the suffrages of the people, and delivering them only to their own adherents." And he ended by saying in the words of Burke, "I will look those proud combinations in the face." We cannot but admire the boldness of these words and the proud independence which they exhibited. Though particularly opposed to the patrician exclusiveness of the Whigs, Canning was equally in earnest against their rivals. With their long tenure of power the great Tory nobles waxed insolent, and attempted on Liverpool's death to dictate to the king a choice of a premier. As the first lord of the Treasury controlled all the government boroughs and most of the patronage, George the third's great aim had always been to nominate his own prime minister. His son was equally alive to the importance of this privilege and would not yield, with the result that Canning became prime minister. Both press and people exulted over the defeat of "the pretensions of the great families to interfere in the nomination of ministers," without regard to the wishes of sovereign or of people.

This theory of the patriot king, who checked aristocracy in the name of his own independence and in deference to the popular will, has not survived. It had many of the defects of direct personal government without the advantages of absolutism. The king might be brought into ridicule and contempt and become a party leader. But Canning was forced to admit the direct and active interference of the Crown in affairs, because his views on Reform precluded any further and more direct influence being exercised by the people. No king had ever been so unpopular as George the third during the first half of his reign, until George the fourth surpassed him throughout most of his period of rule. In each case the reason was that men feared the influence of their personal opinions and characters upon the course of government. Personal government, in whatever shape and however restricted, was obsolete in theory and discredited in practice. Monarchy, which in the later days of George the fourth seemed built on quicksands, has recovered its foundations of rock under the seventh Edward, because the king has gained in influence something of what he has lost in power.

Disraeli, indeed, revived Canning's idea of royal democracy, but placed the sovereign above and beyond party. The heresy of the three branches, which lodged power equally in King, Lords and Commons appears to-day as a sort of triple see-saw, an ingenious construction as delightful in theory as impossible in practice. Yet it was believed both by\* Burke and by Blackstone, the two greatest intellects who ever devoted themselves to expounding constitutional practice and theory. To allow the king much power in choosing ministers and dispensing patronage was to give this theory the only practical meaning it could bear. Also the excitable and poetical mind of Canning invested monarchy with mysticism reverence and tradition. He did not descend to the adulation of Sir Walter Scott, who pocketed the glass from which royalty had drunk, swore to preserve it as an heirloom, but inadvertently smashed it to pieces as he sat down. But he spoke with bated breath of the "awful office of a king," the living symbol of unity, order and peace. When referring to the king's speech he did not say, "His Majesty's gracious message," but, "the words we have heard from the sacred lips which spake from the throne of this land." † That Canning should uphold some of the abuses as well as the privileges of monarchy is but another instance of the reactionary influence of Jacobinism upon one of the most liberal minded and keen sighted of statesmen.

Though Canning in this one instance tried to give effect to a system out-worn in practice, no one was usually more ready to recognize and acknowledge the practical and living elements of the Constitution. He was the first important statesman to proclaim and avow the existence of the Cabinet. That strange and mysterious body had originally been a recognized committee of the Privy Council, which was gradually converted into an informal gathering of ministers. Its principles were at this time but imperfectly recognized, chiefly

\* Burke's views are almost contradictory, for whilst wishing to reduce the royal control of patronage he designed for the king a great and effective influence in affairs.

† Canning has been accused of unworthy deference to the wishes of the Sovereign. The two cases usually advanced to prove this, are the appointments he gave to Ponsonby and Lord Francis Conyngham. The former was approved and suggested by Liverpool whose one firmness was his attitude towards his Sovereign. The latter is at least susceptible of an explanation highly honourable to Canning—advanced upon a later page. Note p. 186.



because the Cabinet is essentially the development of party, and because party views had at this time been much obscured and confused by the personal influence of George the third. But to deny the existence of the Cabinet, as the Whigs ventured to do in 1806, was absurd. In a debate which arose on the inclusion of the Chief Justice in the Cabinet, the Whigs met all assault, adroitly but pedantically, by the wretched sophistry that the Cabinet was unknown to the Law and Constitution. Canning heaped measureless scorn on this quibble, "we had persons who performed all the functions of government, but directly we entered this House we were told there was no Cabinet." It might be true that the Constitution recognized nothing under the name of Cabinet, but none the less the body had a practical existence and was a responsible Council. To uphold in terms so bold and uncompromising the practical existence of the most secret and mysterious of executive bodies, to declare that publicity implied legality, would have been courageous in any statesman. But such an utterance was bold indeed in the mouth of a Tory statesman at a time when men shrank from constitutional innovation as from leprosy, and mistook antiquity for excellence and tradition for progress. It is only in our last half century that the Cabinet has been recognized as the most essential and characteristic feature of our Constitution, and that its powers and principles have become a commonplace. Canning likewise both assisted and perceived the development of the power of the Prime Minister. Like Pitt, he declared there must be one minister possessing the avowed and real supremacy. When discussing the formation of a new ministry in 1809 he laid it down as a principle, from which he would not depart, that the Prime Minister should be a member of the House of Commons. Though this doctrine has not always been admitted in practice, it is in substance none the less true, for whatever his actual post the leader of the Commons must always have the very greatest influence. Events have justified Canning, and his position was in fact even more defensible, when patronage was still a mainspring of government, and when the leader of the Commons was the chief dispenser of crown boroughs and places. Nowadays the peer-premier can develop and increase his influence by platform speeches and mass-meetings, and thus avoid too great dependence on his colleague in the Commons. That this maxim astounded Canning's contemporaries, more especially the haughty Whig nobles thus excluded from the highest

office in the land, only serves to measure the practical wisdom and foresight of its author.

A steadfast opponent of Reform, Canning was yet an equally zealous champion of the influence of the people and the press. Alison, who identified providence with bigotry, declared that the demons of hell would exult over the passage of the first Reform Bill. Wellington thought the nobility would be brought to the scaffold, and succeeded by the only aristocracy which in his view a democracy produced,—an aristocracy of blackguards. Canning's view was almost as gloomy, Reform meant violent changes, complete democracy and a revival of the French Revolution with its thousand shapes of death. \* But his arguments and objections were more profound and philosophic than those of other Tories, and his orations against Reform remain the only ones which we can read without laughter or treat as serious. Projects of Reform he held were in fact Radical, inevitably striking at the roots of our oldest and best institutions. Above all they substituted uniformity for diversity and monotony for gradation. Parliamentary representation was in some cases unsatisfactory and even corrupt, but in its unexampled variety it mirrored the different interests and classes of the country. For constituencies had every variety of franchise, some were wholly democratic, others had a moderate property franchise, others were confined to a few venal pot-wallopers. This very difference was the product and the origin of that regulated ordered and balanced liberty, in which England stood alone and unique. If the real excellence of our Constitution lay in its age, at no time had popular influences been so effective upon the government. A complete and perfect democratical representation could not exist with a mixed or constitutional form of government. "Gentleman opposite," said he, "are always talking of the people as distinguished from the rest of the nation. But strip the nation of its aristocracy, strip it of its merchants, of its gentry and I no more recognize a people than I recognize in the Bird of Diogenes the Man of Plato." It will be seen that in domestic as in foreign policy Canning strove to hold the balance, and to stem both the extravagance of despotism and the licentiousness of unbridled freedom. The French Revolution had only been possible, because all

\* It is most striking to see how the philosophic Radicals esteemed him. "I would undertake," wrote James Mill, "to make Mr. Canning a convert to the principles of good government sooner than your Lord Grey or Sir James Mackintosh."—p. 24, *Sel. Corres. Macvey Napier*, Sept. 10th, 1819.



privilege and diversity had sunk beneath the torrent. "The first work of the Jacobins was to loosen every established political relation, every legal holding of man to man, to destroy every corporation, to dissolve every existing class of society, to reduce the nation to individuals in order afterwards to congregate them into mobs." While each constituency retained its special and *parochial* character a dead level of uniformity was impossible, and there was a barrier to the excesses of a blind or headstrong majority. While Birmingham had no members and Cornwall forty-two, while the Crown controlled its government boroughs, the Constitution was safe. Unbridled democracy might sweep the polls, where the franchise was popular, but would be powerless when confronted with the close and narrow system of representation elsewhere. To use a simile it would be as Cœur de Lion's sword, which cleft the iron bar but failed before the silken cushion.

"Canning," said Coleridge, "flashed such a light around the Constitution that it was difficult to see the ruins of the fabric through it." The old system had no such ingenious and logical defender as Canning, who was right in perceiving that the changes proposed were organic, and implied not only progress but revolution. The Whigs thought otherwise, and proposed to balance power with liberty and property against population. Lord John Russell, their most prominent leader, maintained that the Reform Bill would be a lasting and permanent settlement, and thereby earned the nickname of "Finality Jack." To expect that the people would remain permanently satisfied with the moderate concessions of 1832 was in fact about as reasonable a hope as that of the Aztecs, who sent a cartwheel of solid silver to Cortez, in the full assurance that it would induce him to suspend his advance on their capital. Long before 1832 Canning had foreseen that the new forces and ideas, thus recognized, would become abiding and perpetual in their influence, and lead inevitably to that turbulent democracy which both Whigs and Tories feared. The justification of the Whigs does not lie in their foresight, but in their appreciation of the new conditions around them. The merchants and shopkeepers had become so wealthy and important that they were resolved to have representation even at the cost of rebellion. The Whigs applied immediate remedies with no suspicion of ultimate results, Canning underestimated the needs of the present but saw farther into the future.

If Canning sanctioned no changes in the framework of the

body politic, how did he regard the popular elements in the Constitution? He was the last to sanction abuses in venal and corrupt boroughs, and would in extreme cases disfranchise such constituencies. But in the main he trusted that a sound well-informed and healthy public opinion, diffused throughout every polling district, would act as the leaven and remedy of corruption. Whenever the popular wish was loudly expressed, Tadpole and Taper would not dare to oppose it. In the year 1784, when the old iniquitous system of bribery was at its height, Pitt had been returned to power in the face of the gold and the influence of the Whig connection. Though the Crown-influence may have carried many constituencies, public opinion had forced its way through channels hitherto choked with corruption and venality. Pitt was Canning's master and no doubt transmitted the lesson. To the people Canning would grant anything save more direct representation. The last to despise popular representation where it existed, he was the last to wish to extend it where it did not exist. If public opinion was influential and articulate, he believed no minister could fail to interpret the upright sense of the nation itself. The springs and motives of ministerial action, as well as the action itself, must be criticized by the people, who went hand in hand with their representatives and the executive in weighing the propriety of measures. He did much to extend and create a popular interest in affairs by the liberal publication of state papers, and by his popular progresses and circuits. He was the first minister of importance who habitually delivered addresses to his constituents. He was the first Foreign Secretary who elaborately explained and expounded his policy beyond the four walls of St. Stephen's. To the demagogue and the agitator he opposed himself as a popular Minister of the Crown, regarding himself as specially the choice of the people, confiding in them and reconciling power with liberty.

The Press of the early nineteenth century was personal and savage, where the modern journal is only humorous or sensational. No man was at one time more persistently misrepresented or vilified in the papers than Canning, yet none ever uttered a more eloquent eulogy of the Fourth Estate. "What should we think," said he, "of a philosopher who in writing . . . a treatise on naval architecture and the theory of navigation, should omit wholly from his calculation that new and mighty power—new at least in the application of its might—which walks the water like a giant rejoicing in his course,—stem-



ming alike the tempest and the tide ;—accelerating intercourse, shortening distances,—creating, as it were, unexpected neighbourhoods and new combinations of social and commercial relations,—and giving to the fickleness of winds and the faithlessness of waves the certainty and steadiness of a highway upon the land? Such a writer though he might describe the ship correctly, though he might show from what quarters the winds of heaven blow, would be surely an incurious and an idle spectator of the progress of nautical science, who did not see in the power of steam a corrective of all former calculations. So in political science, he who speculating on the British Constitution, should content himself with marking the distribution of acknowledged technical powers between the House of Lords, the House of Commons and the Crown, and assigning to each their separate provinces—to the Lords their legislative authority, to the Crown its veto (how often used?) to the House of Commons its power of stopping supplies (how often in fact necessary to be resorted to?)—and should think that he had thus described the British Constitution as it acts and as it is influenced in its action ; but should omit from his enumeration that mighty power of Public Opinion, embodied in a Free Press, which pervades and checks and perhaps in the last resort, nearly governs the whole ; such a man would, surely, give but an imperfect view of the government of England as it is now modified, and would greatly under-rate the counteracting influences against which that of the executive power has to contend.” Does our preference of admiration incline to the exquisitely appropriate illustration, or to the practical wisdom which sees through the constitutional fictions of Blackstone and Delolme?

Towards the end of his life Canning's endeavours met with an intoxicating reward. No foreign minister was ever so popular as he during his later years, none was ever so completely identified with the best and noblest instincts of the nation. This is the more remarkable because his view of the duties of a minister is very different from that prevalent to-day. So speedy is modern development, so quick the spread of new ideas, that consistency must now depend as much on circumstance as on character, and opportunism in a base or noble form must be the one principle from which no statesman can afford to depart. Democracy is based in the main upon noble ideals, but with its infinite possibilities many dangers must co-exist. It is certain that the people must now always determine the end, however a minister may

determine the means. At the beginning of last century statesmen were of a sterner and nobler mould, in proportion as the people were less alert, active and educated. Both Pitt and Canning combined a sturdy independence of judgment with a true insight into popular needs. Of his honour no man was more jealous than Canning, and he held it a gross betrayal of trust for a minister to yield to popular clamour what his own deliberate judgment condemned. No contrast can be greater than between him and Peel. The one was a Tory with liberal leanings, firm to obstinacy in his views, and not afraid to double Resignation-Point. The other was a Tory of Tories yet an unrivalled tactician, willing and able to comply with the popular wishes, but too prone to sacrifice convictions not to his own but to the public needs. Modern politicians must always be tempted to follow Peel rather than bethink themselves of Canning. For whereas the one tacked and steered in deference to the gusts and currents of popular feeling, the other was guided by the fixed and eternal stars often into the very teeth of wind and wave.

"The business of the reformer or legislator," said Canning, "is to redress practical grievances, not to run after theoretical perfection." Thus, though an enemy to alterations in the framework of the Constitution in deference to what he believed to be idle theory, he was the eager advocate of wise and liberal legislation. The ideal of the stock Tory of the day was, that we being, if anything, inferior to our fathers, required no more laws than they; a process of thought which would have eventually converted his countrymen into Chinese. Above everything, the nineteenth century has been a legislative age, not only in England, but throughout the world. Canning followed Pitt in being one of the first English statesmen to recognize this. New conditions and circumstances demanded new remedies, new adjustments, and new laws. To most of the grievances of the day Canning was willing to apply legislative physic. The Slave-trade, our Economic and Colonial Policy, our Administrative System, all these must be reformed, improved, and revised. Most of these questions fall rather within the scope of foreign policy than domestic legislation. But the two great domestic evils of the day were the Test Act, and the refusal of the rights of citizenship to the Catholics. It is characteristic of Canning that he opposed the repeal of the former Statute just as vigorously as he advocated Catholic emancipation. The Test Act was



always evaded in practice, and Dissenters suffered only technical grievances, whereas the Catholics groaned beneath a very practical injustice. It is difficult for us to realize that but a century ago, millions of Irishmen and thousands of Englishmen were not only cut off from all hope of attaining the most valued prizes of public life—batons and ermine and coronets—but were debarred the privileges of citizens, and even the rights of men. To punish individuals for conscience sake, to offer them the means of earthly advancement as the price of betraying their spiritual convictions, were ingenuities of mental torture as hideous as the more material fires and racks of the Inquisition. In no cause was Canning's voice more earnestly or more eloquently upraised than on behalf of Catholic emancipation, and this was the more honourable to him because his advocacy was entirely disinterested. He never negotiated with Irish leaders or with their ecclesiastics, he had no Irish following; justice, not interest, was the spur of his enthusiasm. In his early days he had advocated the legislative union of England and Ireland. Pitt concealed the gross and odious bribery by which Castlereagh and Cornwallis carried the Union, and allowed Canning, who in this matter was not in his confidence, to tell the Commons that the charges of corruption were at least not proven. Moreover, Canning boldly asserted that emancipation was to be the certain accompaniment of Union. Had his advice been followed, the cloud of hatred, suspicion and dissension, created by the Union, might have dissolved and broken into the gracious rain and healing dew of mercy. Pitt, no doubt, desired emancipation in all sincerity, but he allowed such promises to be made without contradiction, and \* yet himself abstained from giving any definite pledge. On one occasion, he discussed the subject in the presence of Canning, and doubted the practicability of carrying both measures. "Perish the Union rather than emancipation," said the fiery young man in reply. To his enthusiasm for the Catholics he was to make many sacrifices in the coming years. For the sake of emancipation he many times sacrificed the hopes of high office, for its sake he rejected the fondest wish of his heart, that of representing his University in Parliament, then and for long afterwards the orthodox haven of bigotry and reaction, as Peel and Gladstone also learnt. Finally, in the last act of his life, he did not

\* v. Canning's Speech, March 6th, 1827.

scruple to sacrifice to that cause both his health and his strength, and even his life.

But though Canning did not live to witness the final triumph of his cause, he contributed greatly towards that success. In 1812, he carried a resolution in the Commons for the serious consideration of the Catholic question in the next session. Though the measure of relief proposed was studiously moderate, and securities were thrown in, sufficient to satisfy the less exacting bigots, the Bill was thrown out in committee. When Canning joined the ministry in 1816, it was on the distinct understanding that he should vote as he liked on the Catholic question. In 1818, he lent his powerful support to a motion, which threw open the chief posts in army and navy to the Catholics, and which fortunately became law. Catholics had already the elective franchise though they could not elect a Catholic, and here was a further advance in "the relaxation of this accursed system, in the breathing of a mighty thaw upon that accumulated mass of cold and chilling enactments, which, till then, had congealed and benumbed a nation." On April 30th, 1822, he brought forward a motion for the removal of the disabilities of Catholic Peers, pointing out with his usual knowledge of history that their exclusion was due, not to Reformation principles, but to the special circumstances of the succession under Charles the second. Referring to the then recent coronation, at which the Duke of Norfolk had been Earl Marshall, he made an appeal of deep and solemn pathos. "Did it occur to the Ambassadors of Catholic Austria, of Catholic France, or of States more bigoted in matters of religion . . . that after being thus exhibited to the eyes of the peers and people of England, and to the representatives of the princes and nations of the world, the Duke of Norfolk, highest in rank among the peers, the Lord Clifford and others like him, representing a long line of illustrious ancestry, as if called forth and furnished for the occasion, like the lustres and banners that flamed and glittered in the scene, were to be, like them, thrown by as useless and trumpery formalities?—that they might bend the knee and kiss the hand, that they might bear the train or rear the canopy, might discharge the offices assigned by Roman pride to their barbarian ancestors,

*"Purpurea tollant aurea Britanni,"*

but that with the pageantry of the hour, their importance



faded away—that, as their distinction vanished, their humiliation returned; and that he who headed the procession of peers to-day could not sit among them as their equal on the morrow?” The motion passed the Commons but was wrecked upon the obstinacy of the Peers.

Never had the hopes of the Emancipators stood higher than in 1825, when a Bill for Catholic Relief was again brought forward and supported by Canning in a speech of great eloquence and moderation. But Royalty suddenly descended on the scene in the Lords in the shape of the Duke of York, the looseness of whose private morality was only equalled by the strictness of his public orthodoxy. As heir to the throne he denounced the measure in the most uncompromising terms, avowing his intention to oppose it “in whatever situation it shall please Providence to place me.” His speech delighted the heart of every honest bigot in the land, it was printed in letters of gold and sold broadcast, it was engraved upon snuffboxes, worked upon handkerchiefs, stamped upon pottery. The peers were so impressed by this startling intervention from the steps of the throne that they again rejected the Bill. Canning was bitterly disappointed for his expectations had seldom been as great. Yet once more in the last year of his life, though racked with pain and exhausted with illness, he came forward to champion the cause to which he had devoted his life. He again failed, but assumed the premiership on the express understanding that an early measure of relief should be carried. Had he lived, none can doubt his ministry would have been rendered illustrious by passing that measure. As it was, the ministry of Wellington and Peel, in the vain hope of extending their term of office, rendered themselves ridiculous by carrying that emancipation, which they had so often and so bitterly opposed, and on account of which they had refused to serve under Canning. According to Frere many of the measures passed by Lord Grey for the improvement of the Poor Law, Administrative and Municipal Reform and so forth, would have had the approval of Canning, and would have been carried by him had he lived. But the measure, which even more than these, even more than the Slave Trade or the Corn Laws, owed most to his advocacy will always remain that of Catholic emancipation.

At first sight it might seem that the domestic policy of Canning was a failure, for he died with most of his great designs unfulfilled. On this side he was certainly greater in legacy than achievement, but his education of the Tory party

was a service of the greatest magnitude not only to them but to the nation. Disraeli lived on his principles, Peel on his practical measures, and even Gladstone, when "the rising hope" of the Tory stalwarts, strove to realize to the full the ideas of Canning. In domestic policy originality can hardly be claimed for Canning, except in so far as he contrived to put Burke into practice and Pitt into theory. His ideas were essentially theirs, interpreted in a discriminating spirit and adapted to new conditions. Despite his borrowings he was of all our English party-leaders the most philosophic, the one with the soundest grasp of principles, and with at least a sufficient knowledge of their applications. Lord Acton ranked only Burke above him, and Burke could never have formed a party. The more we study them the more we shall find that a full understanding of Canning's views on internal affairs will explain his complex and illusive character, and his still more complex and often misrepresented foreign policy.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE TIME OF TRIAL (1810-1822.)

FROM the moment when Canning resigned office in 1809 misfortunes never ceased to fall thick upon him for the space of a dozen years. His private character was assailed, his public services forgotten or only remembered and revived by ill-informed abuse of that exploit which posterity has acclaimed as one of his chief titles to greatness. During this time he made no appreciable advance in popularity, and lost much in dignity and power. These years of disappointment and misrepresentation told upon his temper and made him both irritable and nervous. More than once he held within his grasp the highest position in the State and on each occasion, though Fortune was doubtless in a most capricious and merciless mood, his own imprudence and hastiness were greatly concerned with the ruin of his hopes. He seems to have been partly inspired by the example of his master Pitt, than whom no more ambitious, independent and haughty minister ever lived. The higher he had held his pretensions the more he had been courted, the more intoxicating had been his triumphs. Content with leading men he had never troubled himself to manage them. Canning was conscious of abilities almost equal to those of his master, and doubtless thought imitation of his attitude the surest road to success. Herein lay the germ of a fatal mistake. It was true that Pitt had never had much of a personal following, and that Canning's own friends were probably quite as numerous. But Pitt had the entire and whole-hearted support of the king, and therefore all the nomination boroughs and patronage at his command. Moreover he had the great advantage of being the solitary hope of the Tory party, who supported him as the only possible alternative to Fox. Canning was not the only man of talent on the Tory side, and the Whigs under Grenville and Grey had abated

much of the old violence, which had disgusted the moderates. Canning's views on emancipation had made him anathema not only to the king, but to all the High Fliers and Ultras. Eldon and Perceval, who led influential sections of the party, were his irreconcilable enemies. Castlereagh and Sidmouth, with their dependants, were openly hostile until 1812. Not being of noble birth he was suspected as an adventurer by the aristocrats, and had also the misfortune to be one of those "confounded men of genius!" The amazing brilliance of his oratorical triumphs was thought to indicate superficiality and frothiness. A reputation for levity and frivolity is easily acquired but hardly cast aside, it is a coat which quickly becomes a skin. Confidence is a plant of tardy growth, easily uprooted by the whirlwind of popular disfavour, or frost-bitten by the icy breath of slander. Canning's powers of ridicule raised him enemies everywhere at a moment when he had not a friend to spare. He was like the witty Duke of Buckingham and his creditors, "He had his jest while they had his estate." Whilst Canning laughed and joked and so made the Commons distrust him, Castlereagh, Liverpool and Perceval, who never ventured to scandalise the House with a witticism, all passed him in the race for power. Canning's undoubted success at the Foreign Office was regarded as an accident, and even this fortuitous triumph was gravely marred by his high-handed oppression of the Danes! So reasoned all the Ultras and many moderate Tories. When we reckon all this jealousy of Canning's avowed ambitions, all this hatred of his championship of the Catholics, all this suspicion of his character and attainments, we are only surprised that he was ever within a measurable distance of success.

Even before Portland's death, when his span of office and of life were obviously drawing to a close, Canning had discussed possible future arrangements with Perceval and the Duke. Canning had practically told Perceval that the premiership lay between them. He suggested himself as leader of the Commons, and proposed to compensate Perceval either with a peerage and the presidency of the Council, or else with the chancellorship. These negotiations certainly suggest an overweening ambition, and possibly a lack of delicacy and refined scruple on the part of Canning. But they were fair and open, there was here no want of candour, no suspicion of intrigue. Perceval subsequently revealed these negotiations with singular bad taste and most unhappy results. When Eldon, whose one principle was to retain the Great



Seal for his natural life, heard the proposal to deprive him of it, he became Canning's unsleeping enemy. Worse than this the public formed its own opinion from these revelations, and from the duel with Castlereagh, and suspicion of Canning's motives increased. When Portland died the King sent for Canning and consulted him on the formation of a Ministry. With some bluntness Canning suggested that the most obvious man for premier was Perceval, but professed himself willing to undertake the task if His Majesty so willed it. The anti-Catholic King refused his offer, and subsequently described this conversation as "the most extraordinary he had ever borne part in." Perceval became premier over a cabinet so weak and divided that overtures were twice made without effect to Sidmouth, Castlereagh, and Canning. On each occasion they failed because Sidmouth, reminiscent of certain merry rhymes, refused to sit in the same Cabinet as Canning. In 1812 Perceval was shot by an assassin and the Ministry shortly afterwards resigned. The Marquis of Wellesley was asked to form a Government, and called Canning to his assistance. Negotiations with the remnant of the old Government failed, because they would not declare for Catholic Emancipation. An atmosphere of mystery hangs over the overtures then made to Grenville and Grey. The last artifices of poor "Sherry" were exhausted in these proceedings; the Prince Regent was recognized, as he went to see the Whig-leaders at Holland House, walking alone and unattended at dead of night, muffled in a cloak in the true fashion of conspirators. Small wonder that the newspapers and scandalmongers buzzed and stung, when the negotiation broke down upon pretexts apparently trivial and worthless. We may believe, with Canning, that the real cause was that the Prince Regent insisted on his right to name the first lord of the treasury, a privilege the importance of which has been shown. The proud Whig nobles as of old asserted their "right to dictate to the crown and influence the people." So freezing and cold was their attitude that when Lord Moira and Canning, at the Prince Regent's command, made a last attempt at negotiation, Lord Grey did not even trouble to come up to town but contented himself with a haughty correspondence from afar.

Eventually the old Government was reconstituted, and Lord Liverpool selected as its head. His first measure was to approach Canning, of whom he was a warm friend and admirer. Castlereagh, now completely reconciled, generously offered to

yield up the Foreign Office, but insisted that he himself should lead in the Commons. Times had changed indeed, for when Canning discussed prospects with Perceval in 1809 he had not considered Castlereagh as a serious rival. Canning described this offer of Castlereagh's as "the handsomest ever yet made to an individual." The motives which led him to refuse it seem to have been mingled and diverse. Three great Parliamentary authorities warned him that to accept would be inconsistent with the best usages of the House, and that he should insist on the lead. He seems also to have feared the possibility of friction with Castlereagh, and to have been unable to bend his proud spirit to accept even the suspicion of inferiority in the Lower House. Had he joined the Ministry of 1810 he would have undoubtedly been premier on Perceval's death, had he now accepted these terms he would have been Foreign Secretary at a most important and critical period of England's history. Ambition rather than independence made him reject the prize. The truth is the Government was weak, he thought that he would prove to be indispensable, and would be accepted on his own terms. But by the grimmest sarcasm which fortune had yet launched at him the Ministry was saved, because it was irrevocably committed to the General and the measures chosen and adopted by Canning himself. The sword of Wellington brought popularity to the tottering Ministry, and Canning was lost because of the success of his own policy.

The one gleam of triumph, which shone upon Canning during these gloomy years, was caused by his election at Liverpool. In 1812 a number of influential men from that city requested him to offer himself as a candidate. Canning consented and stood as Tory representative with General Gascoyne against the redoubtable Mr. Brougham, and the no less redoubtable Mr. Creevey. Elections are to-day sometimes associated with a certain mild hustling and a qualified scurrility, in those days fists and sticks often alternated with the most poisonous slander and abuse. "I have myself gone through the ordeal of a popular election,"\* said Canning, "without the accompaniment of mud and grenadiers. I was not subjected to such *striking* proofs of favouritism, as those idols of the people, the Whigs: my retreat was effected with more safety than that of a routed cavalcade, who with laurels in their hats and brickbats at their heels, bedaubed with

\* May 18, 1819.



ribbands and rubbish, were only rescued from their overwhelming popularity by a detachment of His Majesty's Horse Guards." Canning headed the poll on this first occasion, and held his seat during three other elections, all marked by the relative good taste and feeling with which they were conducted. His fame and his eloquence excited the greatest enthusiasm, clubs were founded in his honour and named after him, and some of his most famous speeches were delivered to this constituency. The effect upon him was no less great for he learnt and studied the needs of a great commercial and democratic centre, and the lessons were not forgotten when he came to direct the foreign policy of his country. Whilst in Liverpool he often stayed with Sir John Gladstone, who sometimes paid the election expenses. The room which he occupied is still shown, where he would sit for hours silent and thoughtful, gazing out over the sea, and dreaming of the destinies of England. On the strand just beneath the window there often played a little boy, who learnt his first lessons in state policy and his first impressions of greatness from his father's famous guest, under the shadow of whose great name he was bred.

Success at Liverpool, though pleasing to vanity, was no real compensation for failure in more ambitious projects. Yet Canning's eloquence was as great as ever, though the magic of official authority no longer lent it weight. He was an independent supporter of the Government, not scrupling to denounce vacillation and inefficiency, never hesitating to urge a vigorous prosecution of the war. His chief difference with the Tories was in 1811, when he opposed the Financial resolutions of Mr. Vansittart. An over-issue of paper-money had depreciated the coinage, and the Bank of England made all its payments in notes. The Bullion Committee of 1810, of which Horner and Huskisson were the guiding spirits, had advocated resumption of cash payments in two years in a report full of economic wisdom. To this the Chancellor of the Exchequer replied by a series of Resolutions, worthy of the most prominent place in Bentham's "*Book of Fallacies*," which had for their object that the Bank should not resume payments in coin until six months after the conclusion of peace, the period already fixed by Act of Parliament. Canning agreed with the principles of the Bullionists, and with the conclusions of the Government. He thought a sudden contraction of bank notes might produce alarming effects, and that for the moment a declaration of opinion

would strengthen the foundations of the money system of the country, and re-establish the credit of the true standard of our currency. But this was seriously endangered by the Resolutions in question, which were full of the most ludicrous absurdities. One of them, for example, affirmed that a £1 note and a shilling were in public estimation equal to a guinea of full weight. On these and similar absurdities Canning poured a flood of ridicule. It warmed his heart, said he, to hear the Chancellor's belief in the truly heroic and Roman virtue of the public. He compared this resolution to the decrees of the Inquisition against Galileo. Despite the edict of the Holy Fathers the earth continued to revolve round the sun, and despite Mr. Vansittart a £1 note and a shilling remained equivalent in hard cash to five crowns. No efforts of Canning were ever happier than these two famous speeches on the currency, which are in fact unique and unexampled of their kind. He illumined the driest statistics with his wit, he flashed light on the most obscure and enlivened the dullest and most inelegant of subjects. John Bright caused the House to listen for the beating of an angel's wings in the air, but Canning made the Commons laugh whilst debating upon economics.

When Canning's followers began to dine fourteen and vote twelve, his cause was hopeless. In 1813 Canning, with rare disinterestedness and generosity, disbanded his party, that they might not be hindered by connection with him. Whitbread ungenerously declared Canning had left them to shift for themselves. Byron said Canning reminded him of Falstaff and his recruits, "I have led my ruffians where they are all well peppered, there are but three of the hundred and fifty left." Mr. Creevey said Canning's friends were "very sore, but more because it excites laughter, and though jokers themselves, they cannot endure any ridicule against their own lot." These were idle and malicious calumnies, Sturges Bourne and Huskisson at once took posts in the Administration, and when Canning at last joined it himself, it was not before he had insisted on provision for everyone of his prominent supporters. Now that he had become "a wandering voice," he seems to have thought of abandoning politics for ever and devoting himself to literature, rural pursuits, and travel. This led him in 1814 to commit what he always regarded as the greatest blunder of his life, though he added with characteristic chivalry, "if the thing with past experience were to be done over again, I should act the same part and



conscious of right I must brave the consequences." He had been much troubled by the health of his eldest son, and was about to travel with him to Portugal in a private character. The Ministry heard of his intention and requested him to undertake the office of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, to welcome the Prince Regent at Lisbon on his return from Brazil. It was indeed peculiarly suitable that the Minister, who had initiated the English defence of Portugal and protected the Regent in his retreat to Brazil, should be the Emissary to congratulate him on his return. Canning hesitated and demurred but the Ministry pressed the appointment on him and he eventually yielded. He was welcomed by the merchants of Bordeaux and of Lisbon, who saw in him the representative of the enlightened commercial policy of Pitt. He failed in his immediate object because the Prince Regent deferred his visit. When the Hundred Days began, he did his utmost to get the Portuguese to declare war against Napoleon, but without effect. His mind and imagination seem to have been powerfully excited by the memories and the relics of French occupation, which already gave to Portugal a classic interest. In a speech delivered at a banquet of English merchants at Lisbon held just before his return to England<sup>\*</sup> he gave full rein to his emotions. "True it is,"\* he said, "that in this sterile and unpromising soil was deposited the seed of that Security, whose branches now overshadow mankind. . . . I could not traverse those mighty fastnesses of nature which fence this capital, those bulwarks behind which victory herself retired to new plume her wings for a flight more soaring and sustained. I could not contemplate those holy ruins, amongst which I have been wandering, where an awful curiosity pauses to enquire whether the surrounding destruction has been wrought by ancient convulsions of nature, or by the sportive sacrilege and barbarous malignity of the foe. . . . without rendering a just homage to the character of the nation which, by all that it has done and more by all that it has endured, has raised itself to a pitch of moral eminence so far beyond the proportion of its territory, population or power."

Canning returned to England to assume a place in the Cabinet. The Catholic question remained an open one in the Cabinet, each member being allowed to vote as he pleased on motions for or against it. The territorial settlement of Europe

\* Ap. 2, 1816.

had already been arranged and ratified in formal documents. There only remained therefore the personal question, as to what Canning conceived to be due to his merits and what the Government were prepared to offer him. Recognizing that his bid for supreme power had failed, and that his party no longer existed, he accepted the office of President of the Board of Control for India. But hardly was he settled in office than he was assailed by the Whigs, who were only too glad to get an opportunity of retaliating upon the man who had so often ridiculed them. On May 17th Lambton brought forward a motion with regard to the Lisbon Embassy, which was seconded by Sir Francis Burdett. Stripped of its decorous circumlocutions, the motion really charged the Ministry with perpetrating a job. It insinuated that the Prince Regent's return had been an insincere pretext for depriving the original ambassador of his place, and giving a much larger salary to an independent critic of the Government, in order to seal his lips and win his support. Canning's reply was acknowledged as a masterpiece. He proved that the Ministry had not depended on rumour, but had received such emphatic assurance from the Prince Regent as to his proposed return, that they had actually sent a British squadron to escort him from Brazil. He proved that the original ambassador had retired because of ill-health, and that he himself had arranged to go to Lisbon in a private capacity, before he received the offer of the appointment. So much was this the case that he had previously engaged a private house for which he was obliged to pay, though compelled as ambassador to live at the official residence. As for the question of salary he showed that it would have been perfectly in order for him to have claimed a much larger sum than he did, and that in point of fact his arrival had been the cause of the most rigid economies in the expenses of the Embassy, which contrasted most signally with the extravagance of the previous year. The House was convinced, and none ventured to continue the discussion except Acland, who declared that this defence had thrilled through every heart, and that he would have been proud to be so accused to have been so defended. Henceforward none spoke of the "Lisbon job" except to praise Canning's speech, which may be regarded as the classic reply to insinuations of a kind which have in these later days happily become less frequent.

Some statesmen have shown such transcendent ability in one department of state that other services, no less solid



though perhaps less shining, are overlooked or forgotten. No one thinks of the younger Pitt as a foreign Minister who for some eight years acted as the general arbiter and pacificator of Europe. Peel still lives as one of the greatest of financiers, but two popular synonyms for policemen alone serve to indicate him as the greatest of Home Secretaries. The great services of Palmerston at the War Office, and of Gladstone in promoting a general administrative reform in all Government departments, are lost in the blaze kindled by their more ostentatious labours. The popular method, which thus persists in seeing but the most prominent characteristic or service of a great man, cannot always be that of history. A single powerful ray of sunshine, unbroken and unintermittent, ends by blinding or obscuring the sight. The historian should aim rather at a picture in the style of Rembrandt, where a background of rich and luminous golden brown is flecked with dazzling points of light.

Democracies have short memories, say its critics, yet traditions of Canning's foreign policy still linger among us. But even Macaulay's schoolboy might be surprised to learn that Canning was one of the most eminent of those, who have directed the affairs of our great Indian Empire from an office chair in London. This is the more remarkable because his position, as President of the Board of Control, was under the dual direction of Parliament and the Board of Directors, and his position was therefore anomalous and peculiar. He had to defend our Indian policy in Parliament, and at the same time to persuade a company whose business was commerce to undertake wars, which were directly if not entirely based on political necessities. Being the life-long friend of Wellesley he had doubtless imbibed the large imperial ideas and the farseeing views of that great Indian ruler. Under Wellesley, the Directors had been brushed aside, set at naught and even ridiculed by their imperious pro-consul. But though the duties of the President of the Board were rather those of control than initiative, Canning contrived by the most consummate tact to get the real direction of affairs into his own hands, without alienating or offending\* the Directors. There remained only the Viceroy—the

\* That they had grown no more "Imperial" since the days of Wellesley is clear from a letter of Canning to Hastings, where he speaks of them making concessions "for considerations *affecting themselves* rather than their Empire in India." These and other unpublished letters quoted below in Britt: Mus: 31,232. Add. MSS.

Marquis of Hastings, the quondam Lord Moira, the butt of many sarcasms in the "Anti-Jacobin." With him at first Canning was not wholly in agreement. As in all his views of policy we find a desire to hold the balance, to strike the mean, in this case between the policy of grasping aggression and that of unjustifiable forbearance. He saw that expansion was sometimes inevitable, and that war on a large scale must on occasion be undertaken in the larger interests of peace.

Wellesley's work had been left unfinished and an army of 40,000 freebooters, known as the Pindaris, made irruptions into British and Native territory, which were characterised by the worst horrors Oriental ingenuity could suggest. It was needful to strike a decisive blow, for \* "attacked, routed, scattered in all directions, they would speedily collect and congregate again; as a globule of quicksilver, dispersing for a moment under the pressure of the finger, reunites as soon as that pressure is withdrawn." Hastings advanced against them with 90,000 men, and the subsequent war involved not only the Pindaris but the whole Mahratta Confederacy, all the princes of which either openly or secretly supported their fellow freebooters. Hastings was victorious, the Pindaris were destroyed, the Peishwa or head of the Confederacy was deposed and his dominions annexed, whilst the other Mahratta princelets, with the kingdoms of Rajputana, were placed under British protection. For the rest of his period of office Canning devoted himself to consolidating the conquests, and to developing the internal resources of the country. He did his utmost to preserve the substantive independence of the native states, and to enable them to maintain their position. Further he did something to improve the commercial relations between England and India. Among other innovations he forbade the censorship of the press, a fact which Anglo-Indians would now learn with surprise, and natives perhaps with unavailing regret for the larger freedom of a bygone day. He was the first to persuade the Directors to appoint hardworking and distinguished servants of the Company to the higher and more honourable posts, instead of sending out officials from England, whose claims were usually based on friendship with the Directors or influence with the Ministry. Prominent among these appointments were Munro and Elphinstone. The one became Governor of

\* Canning, March 4th, 1819—A valuable exposition of our Indian policy. So great was his insight into the native character that in 1821 he even argued against the abolition of the Suttee.



Bombay, whilst the other received a high administrative post, and both fully vindicated the confidence and insight of Canning. That much of this Indian policy was due to Hastings is clear, but Canning may certainly claim a large share of credit and renown for completing the work of the "great Marquess." How earnestly he laboured to promote the welfare of India, and to strengthen its connection with England may be better shown perhaps by a few glimpses into minute detail than by a long and elaborate exposition of policy. These will also serve to prove what has sometimes been denied, that Canning possessed considerable administrative ability outside his special department of foreign affairs. Early in 1817 Hastings complained to Canning of the excessively heavy postal duties and delays. Canning endeavoured to remedy this, and after having vainly memorialised Vansittart on the subject, eventually appealed to Lord Liverpool and carried his point of lightening the duties and accelerating the transit of letters. He considered apparently that it was necessary to strengthen by this means the slender ties between soldiers in India and their families in England. Otherwise there was some danger of the soldiers assimilating the climate and manners of the natives, with whom they had "a frank cheery intercourse, whereas the civilians are regarded with estrangement by each party." To take another instance Canning wrote to Lord Liverpool (Sept. 16, 1818) "*The remittance of old Madeira home is the first precursor of the return of the veteran servant whether soldier or civilian. They remit it in bottles because they think the cask liable to violation.*" England has just imposed a heavy duty on bottled wine . . . Now is this worth while? How warmly this is felt . . . you may judge when I tell you that it *has been currently suggested at Calcutta to resent the imposition by a non-importation agreement.*

\*"These are little things, but great Empires sometimes hold together or separate for little causes, and I confess I hardly know whether I look with more fearfulness to the extent and composition of the Indian Empire itself or to the tenure of its connexion with this country. Such as that tenure is we ought not to impare it, for any slight cause or from any motive of small fiscal benefit to England."

\*A verbal and hardly unconscious similarity to this passage is to be found in the speech delivered by Lord Canning on his departure to his famous Indian Vice-royalty. The son, no doubt, well knew his father's views.

This letter shows alike Canning's patient forethought and command of administrative detail. It reveals also that perception, which is only found in the smallest and greatest of men, the sense of the importance of trifles.

In the more general policy of the Government Canning was willing as ever to take his full share and responsibility. The years 1816-9 are memorable in England for being a time of more social distress and more governmental oppression than any other period in the last two hundred years. They synchronised with the White terror in France, and with the measures by which Metternich ingenuously declared he was "giving peace to the World." In England, where opinion was more free, oppression was less stern, but it is little to boast that a constitutional government avoided the extremities to which convinced despots resorted. It was the age of the Six Acts, that Whip with the six thongs, of the battle of Peterloo, of the suspension of Habeas Corpus. Between 1809-22 five hundred editors or writers were in prison. From 1816-9 public meetings were entirely suspended, and even the harmless academic oratory of University and College debating societies was sternly suppressed. Freedom of speech only existed at Eton, where schoolboys held debates on classical subjects and denounced Castlereagh and Sidmouth under the thin disguise of Sejanus or Tigellinus. The real causes of disturbance in England were economic, the confusion caused by the Continental system, by the extraordinarily oppressive corn laws, and the depreciated currency. The loss of employments consequent on the conclusion of peace, the disturbed state of the continent, the bad harvests, the enormous National Debt, the obsolete financial system, and the tottering state of credit, all these were causes direct or indirect of that "ignorant impatience of the relaxation of taxation," which Castlereagh, with an equal absence of feeling and humour, ascribed to the people of England. To these causes of disturbance were added the machinations of agitators and professional patriots. Some wild speeches were made, and republicanism and communism affirmed. The mildest reforms suggested were annual parliaments and universal suffrage. Pikes were forged in Sheffield, workmen assumed 'le bonnet rouge' of liberty and set off to smash the machinery of capitalists, a plan was formed to storm the Bank and blow Westminster in the air. Two cobblers and a butcher actually did plot to murder the Cabinet as it sat over its wine, after dinner. These realities or legends sprang either from



physical suffering and misery, or from the venal imagination of the thousand spies of Sidmouth. In the main the actual responsibility for the revival of an outworn system of repression, which interfered with the liberties without alleviating the distresses of the individual, rests upon Castlereagh and Sidmouth. The former was at this time the real ruler of England, and advocated this system because it coincided with his ideas on foreign policy. The latter was actually responsible for carrying out the details of the scheme, and promoted that manufacture of information and stimulation of conspiracy, which will always accompany those systems of government which base their ideas of popular wishes on the reports of informers, which found their legal evidence on the depositions of interested spies, and entrust the maintenance of civil order to dragoons.

But Castlereagh and Sidmouth can shift part of their load on to other shoulders. "Pound foolish" Vansittart, who presided at the Exchequer, was probably of all modern English financiers the most incapable. He was certainly the last chancellor in the world to avert a commercial or economic crisis by bold or vigorous measures. The extreme conservatism of his finance, the obscurity of his methods, and his utter inability to adapt his budgets to the changing conditions of the age, make him indirectly responsible for much of the confusion of this time. Upon Canning responsibility also rests but of a moral rather than a practical kind. Placed as he was he could do little to influence the Cabinet in taking measures to avert financial distress or social calamities. But he was so bold and so uncompromising a defender of the repressive policy that contemporary slander did not hesitate to describe him as a sort of hired gladiator striking down all opponents, in order to ingratiate himself with the Ministry. This was of course absurd, though it may be that the passionate feeling of the orator led him into utterance which he regretted in moments of calm. But no one can study his political creed without concluding that this attitude had a natural source in some of its articles. However regrettable this confession it is one it is needful to make, and absolution must be sought in the generally wise and liberal tenor of his beliefs. But now cries of "Reform" and "Republic," "Bread or Blood," echoed all around: had the monster of Jacobinism been awakened? Canning perceived a really formidable movement, and resolving that Jacobin incendiarism must be quenched at all costs defended and

agreed with Castlereagh's home policy. He failed to see that the revolutionary fervour awakened in England in 1793 was a passion and emotion of the heart, whilst the extravagances of 1816 were due less to disloyalty than to hunger, and owed almost nothing to impracticable theories and almost everything to the pitiless logic of facts. As in the days of the "Anti-Jacobin" Canning's humour never left him. With his usual skill he ridiculed the alleged sufferings of pretended martyrs, among them the "revered and ruptured Ogden." This man was as professional a patriot as Wilkes, with this difference that while the latter had real and avowed grievances to complain of, the former had to thank the Government for doing him a service. Whilst in gaol he was completely cured of a painful disease of twenty years' standing, on which account he wrote a letter to the Home Secretary full of the most abject expressions of gratitude. Yet directly the healed and grateful Ogden emerged from prison he declared that the weight of his irons had caused the disease in question, from which he was still suffering the utmost agonies. Canning's exposure of this hero and his like, though it brought down upon him the ill-formed charge that he was callous to human suffering, was therefore a real public service. It is only to be regretted that, in his general attitude during these years, he should have persisted in reading "Jacobinism" where he should have read "Famine."

For parallels to the event which next disturbed public feeling we have to turn the page of fiction, till we find in the conduct of Leontes to Hermione something of the vengeance and brutality, which inspired George the Fourth in his conduct toward Queen Caroline. That unhappy woman had early become separated from her husband for reasons which the character of the self-styled "first Gentleman in Europe" make it needless to explain. It is not denied that the Princess had many faults, she had no sense of dignity or of the obligations of her rank, she was impulsive, bad-mannered and foolish, though kindly and good-natured. In old days she had been a great friend of Canning and his wife, had stood sponsor to one of his children, and often stayed at Gloucester Place. At her residence, in company with Sir John Scott and Perceval, Canning had often borne his part in rollicking games such as "Blind Man's Buff." Directly the two former came into office they behaved towards the Princess with the greatest perfidy and even malignance, taking part in the second Commission of investigation upon her conduct, though both had denounced



the previous "delicate inquiry." Though the charges against her were completely dismissed she was shunned by many former friends, Canning almost alone to his transcendent honour meeting her upon the old terms and with the same kindness. In 1814 he advised her to go abroad and to live in retirement at the court of Brunswick. This was the best advice possible, and it would have been wise had she adopted it in entirety. As it was she travelled over Europe pursued by rumour and malice. These changes began to have a serious meaning when she announced her intention of returning to England. Directly he heard this Brougham wrote in (Aug. 5, 1819); "Her coming would be pregnant with every sort of mischief (not to mention the infernal personal annoyance of having such a devil to plague me for six months)." Such were the expressions of the man who posed as the chivalrous defender of persecuted innocence. It shows that the Whigs were chiefly influenced in her defence as a means for avenging themselves upon the Regent, whom they hated for his abandonment of their principles. "Faction indeed had marked her for its own," as Canning said.

Meanwhile a Commission had proceeded to Milan, which returned laden with evidence based on the dubious testimony of sailors, hotel-keepers, lackeys, and chambermaids, some of whom could not speak English, whilst others had been dismissed her service or were influenced by hopes of gain. George, now King, announced his intentions of seeking a divorce on the ground of the criminal misconduct of his wife. The combined hypocrisy and insolence of the demand of this notorious profligate would be hard to excel, even if the Queen were guilty and the verdict is "not proven." Minutes and memoranda passed almost daily between King and Cabinet. Ministers declared there was not sufficient ground for a prosecution in the Courts, suggested that the Queen should receive an offer of complete separation with a large income payable during her residence abroad, and also proposed to exclude her name from the liturgy. This minute was forwarded on Feb. 10, 1820, and docketed by Canning, with the reservation that he could not have agreed to the omission of her name from the liturgy if any penal measures, of whatever kind, had been in contemplation. For this omission there were precedents and it was at first agreed to by Mr. Brougham, the Queen's official defender, whilst it must be remembered that the Queen is in England only the consort of her husband. But all these efforts were in vain. On June 7th

the Queen arrived in England, was received with a royal salute at Dover, and frantic applause by the London mob. On the same day Castlereagh brought down the famous Green Bag to the Commons and moved for an inquiry against Her Majesty. On June 20-1 Canning spoke in the Commons, declared he viewed the Queen with respect and affection and exclaimed, 'So help me God, I will never stand in the position of accuser to that individual.' He sought an interview with the King and begged to lay down the seals, but the latter conceded to him perfect liberty of action and implored and commanded him to remain. He refused the office of Home Secretary, and went abroad in August before the proceedings against her Majesty began. In November the Bill was carried in the Lords by the small majority of 9 whereupon Liverpool announced the Ministry would not proceed with it in the Commons. In December Canning returned to England and feeling that discussions with reference to the Queen would now be so much intermixed with the general business of the session that his attitude could not be clearly defined, laid down the seals. His view was undoubtedly correct, for the King now entered upon a campaign of petty persecution and insult \* "of that type in which the royal veteran had already reaped so many laurels." Even Brougham praised the\* "noble and manly conduct of Canning," whilst the public, uncritical and full of chivalrous pity for the poor kindly persecuted woman, lauded it to the very heavens.

It must be admitted that, from his own point of view, the conduct of the King towards Canning had been disinterested and generous. His Majesty may have been offended at Canning's eventual resignation, and is believed to have suspected, though most unjustly, that Canning had unduly used his influence among the peers to throw out the Divorce Bill. At any rate it is clear that he had conceived a violent dislike towards Canning, and eagerly caught at the proposal of the Directors to appoint him Governor-General of India. Canning had deprecated the attempts of Liverpool to press him on the King during 1821. He had been caught by the glamour and mystery of the East, and by the vision of ruling over a hundred millions of subjects. But just as he was to enter upon this splendid and gilded exile a sudden and tragic incident changed the destiny of Canning, and perhaps that of England too. On August 12th, 1822, Castlereagh, now

\* Brougham—Histl. Sketches—George IV.



Marquis of Londonderry, whose mind had long been failing, died by his own hand in a fit of madness. After much delay Wellington and Liverpool persuaded the reluctant King and the stubborn Eldon, and offered the whole inheritance to Canning. At one time Canning had thought that to be in office was "to tread Heaven's azure," and to be out of it to suffer like Lucifer in the burning marle. But time and age had brought disillusion, the Governor-Generalship offered a life of ease and splendour, and a princely salary to repair his damaged fortune. The labours of the Foreign Office and the leadership of the Commons were immense. The Government was as discredited abroad as at home. It required great courage to face the European situation whilst little honour could be expected. But with all these considerations in view Canning resolved to return to the public service, and was thus "restored to the labouring oars for life." "Ten years,"\* wrote he to Sir Charles Bagot, "have made a world of difference and prepared a very different sort of world to bustle in than that which I should have found in 1812. For fame, it is a squeezed orange; but for public good there is something to do, and I will try—but it must be cautiously—to do it. You know my politics well enough to know what I mean, when I say that for *Europe* I shall be desirous *now* and *then* to read *England*."

The development of a system of foreign policy, so glorious and fortunate for his country, amidst the greatest trials and difficulties must be reserved for a later page. It must suffice here to point out the purely internal aspect of the difficulties with which Canning had to contend, his differences with his colleagues and his sovereign. The Home Secretary, who had hidden his head in a coronet to escape the ridicule which clung to the name of Addington, had found equal odium attached to that of Sidmouth and now resigned to the advantage of his country, though he still attended Cabinet meetings. The Cabinet still contained eight ultra Tories, two moderates, and four ministers of liberal tendencies, all of whom paradoxically professed themselves followers of Pitt. Of the two men of strongest character in the Cabinet Wellington was often, Eldon invariably, opposed to Canning. The balance of opinion was on the whole against him, and he had often to struggle against decided odds. His one advantage as yet was the whole-hearted support of Liverpool, who was dominated by the powerful mind of the Foreign Secretary. Rush, the American Ambassador, tells how he was once at

\* Nov. 5, 1822.

Canning's house when Planta was reading aloud from Gulliver's Travels. He got to a passage which described the sailors "when the sea broke strange and dangerous, hauling off the lanniard of the whipstaff, and helping *the man at the helm.*" The reading stopped and silence ensued till it was broken by Canning murmuring abstractedly and as in unconscious reverie, "*and helped the man at the helm.*" This he repeated several times and was silent.

Faced with such contrary opinions in the Cabinet it is obvious that the attitude of the sovereign was under these circumstances of great importance. On the whole during the early years he was decidedly opposed to Canning, whose difficulties were increased by the fact that the King was not only influenced by other ministers, but by foreign diplomatists. Among these the most prominent was that fair ambassadress, Princess Lieven, one of the most brilliant and talented women of the age, well calculated to flatter and cajole the elderly Adonis upon the throne. But by the greatest skill and tact Canning eventually won the King to his views, and after 1825 had no more faithful adherent. From this time his ascendancy in the Cabinet was assured.

George the Fourth has often been compared unfavourably with his father, and there could in truth be no greater contrast between two human beings. The father was admirable, the son odious in all domestic relations, the one reserved his intrigues for politics, the other applied them impartially to both private and public life. The one had a will of excessive strength and moderate abilities, the other was utterly weak in character but possessed gifts far above mediocrity. The one in all public affairs was obstinate, ungenerous and selfish, the other was not without a vague chivalry and fitful generosity. Admitting in each case the great superiority of the subject to the sovereign it might be said that Castlereagh was George the Third with the seals, whilst the fourth George was Sheridan in a crown. Such then was the monarch and such were the colleagues with whom Canning had to work in his great task of preserving the peace of Europe and exalting the fame of England.



## CHAPTER VIII

### CASTLEREAGH, CANNING, AND THE HOLY ALLIANCE 1815-1822

\* "THE mighty deluge by which the Continent had been so long overwhelmed began to subside. The limits of nations were again visible, and the spires and turrets of ancient establishments began to reappear above the subsiding wave." It was unfortunate that the work of restoring the old institutions whose foundations had been thus washed and worn by the tide of Revolution fell in 1814-5, not to the creator of this beautiful image, but to Castlereagh who could hardly frame an intelligible sentence. Yet persuasion and eloquence were of all gifts needful to England's representative at the Vienna Congress. Castlereagh's great aim seems to have been to show that England was disinterested and impartial and by this means to influence all the other states. His vague and verbose phrases were not likely to stay the three great powers, each eager for extension of territory and for the spoliation of weaker neighbours. How could he hope to impress a Congress whose leading idea was to build up military monarchies to resist any future outbursts of Jacobinism from France? The great powers were provided with "flanks and rears," land was assigned, without consulting its inhabitants, to those powers best able to check France. In such a settlement it was impossible for any Continental power to pay heed to disinterested counsels not forcibly pressed upon them. Considerations numerical, military and statistical governed the Congress. The King of Sardinia seized Genoa, the Austrian Emperor Venice, the King of Prussia got territory on the Rhine, unnatural unions were forced upon Norway and Sweden and Belgium and Holland. These

\* July 7, 1813, Canning.

proceedings were all defended by the novel and absurd doctrine of Legitimacy which, as Macaulay says, was "but Divine Right brought back under an assumed name, like a thief from transportation." It implied only that Kings should be restored to their thrones, the old republics of Poland, Venice and Genoa were destroyed and partitioned, the independence and privileges of smaller states were mercilessly trampled down. Castlereagh fell a victim to the wiles of Talleyrand and the ambition of Alexander. He obtained only vague denunciations of the slave trade from the powers not interested therein, and some half-contemptuous promises from the despots to experiment in Constitutional Government.

Yet the claims of England to liberal treatment were as great as her sacrifices had been. As Mahan finely says "Those far distant storm-beaten ships, which the Grand Army never saw, stood between it and the dominion of the world."\* England had not only swept the fleets of her rival off the face of the waters, but had completely destroyed the commerce and seriously injured the economic resources of France. The Peninsular War was the first proof that France could be repulsed, it showed as in a flash that nationality was even stronger than Napoleon. Yet Spain herself, though she might have resisted, could never have expelled the French but for England, who armed, fed, drilled and encouraged the guerillas, won all the great battles and took all the strong places. Wellington estimated that, of 600,000 Frenchmen who entered Spain, half a million never returned. The addition of a force so large to Napoleon, after his Russian defeat, might have changed the course of History. The battle of the Nations might never have been fought, and Napoleon might have ruled over France, the Netherlands, and half Germany but for England's intervention in Spain and on the seas. Last of all the English armies were the first to invade French soil in 1813 and shared with the Prussians the glory of Waterloo. As Canning phrased it at Liverpool (Jan. 10, 1814);—"That fabled deity, whom † I see portrayed upon the wall, was considered as the exclusive patron of British prowess in battle; but in seeming accordance with the beautiful fiction of ancient mythology, he smote the earth with his trident, and up sprang the fiery warhorse, the emblem of military power." The martial renown of England had indeed been triumphantly restored. It remains to add

\* Mahan : *The Influence of Sea Power on the French Revolution.*

† The figure of Neptune painted on a fresco.



that England was the only great power, which had never made a peace with revolutionary or Napoleonic France at the expense of her Allies, which had never sought to profit by international jealousies and disputes, and which had more than once sustained the conflict singlehanded and alone.

Yet at Vienna her gains, except Malta and the Cape, were little more than she had won at Amiens, the peace "no one was proud of." A dozen more years of enormous sacrifice followed, England not content with ruling the waves flung her gold and her sword into the scale against Napoleon. Our colossal national debt, hugely swollen by loans and subsidies to other powers, demanded that commercial advantages should be gained to compensate for this mortgage upon our future. During the following years foreign nations did not hesitate to disregard her, calculating that she was too crippled by debt to resent such treatment. Yet Castlereagh surrendered Java to the Netherlands and with it the trade of China and the Pacific. But for the efforts of Sir Stamford Raffles, a forgotten Empire builder, who selected and developed Singapore as a centre of commerce which superseded Java, this concession might have ruined our Eastern trade. \* Talleyrand wrote from Vienna to Louis XVIII, that Castlereagh was so utterly ignorant of military topography and Continental geography that he wasted most valuable time in instructing him, and the map of Asia may possibly have been as little known to Castlereagh as that of Europe. Our one gain was that the Vienna territorial arrangements rendered a renewed Continental blockade impossible. But Castlereagh failed to give England an adequate return either in trade or territory for her immense losses and sacrifices in the common cause. It remains to ask if Canning's influence would have been more effective. Of the fame and rank of his country he was always excessively jealous, and perhaps no minister ever so thoroughly identified our political and commercial interests in dealing with foreign powers. To a keen insight into the needs of our

\* *Memoirs* III. p. 15 et seq. cp. Napoleon to O'Meara,—(at St. Helena a very acute criticism even if not genuine). "All the other powers gained acquisitions of territory and millions of souls, but you give up colonies, île de Bourbon to the French, whom you ought to make forget the way to India. Why did you give up Java, Surinam or Martinique? Why not demand Hamburg for Hanover? Then you would have had an Entrepot for manufactures—All I maintain to be owing to the utter imbecility and ignorance of Lord Castlereagh and his utter inattention to the real prosperity of his own country." (The whole passage repays reading).

commerce he joined a sympathy with national movements and aspirations. That he disapproved of the treaty of Vienna in some parts is certain. The system of erecting "flanks and rears" he is said to have condemned. The forcible conquest of Norway by Sweden, assisted by a British naval force and sanctioned by the powers, he said "had filled him with shame, regret and indignation." He might have protested against the shameless partitions of Poland, never yet sanctioned by a European Congress. He might have denounced the principles on which the Congress chopped up, weighed, and parcelled out territory, he would certainly have refused to acknowledge the theory of Legitimacy. When we recollect the immense divergence between Alexander and Austria at Vienna, we see that means were ready to hand. The great results achieved by Canning at a later date with much smaller resources indicate his probable policy. On the other hand, though he would almost certainly have been more successful than Castlereagh, his efforts might still have been limited by the selfishness of other powers, and he might thus have incurred some of the odium which Castlereagh obtained in such unstinted measure.

But for England the territorial settlement, once arranged, had less importance than the Alliance, now formed against Jacobinism in France. Castlereagh described\* this to Lord Liverpool as a design to "make the Jacobins feel that they cannot break loose again. . . . without being committed with all Europe and bringing down again a million of armed men upon their country." He declared he had tried to keep the internal affairs of France in the background and make the colour of our attitude as European as possible. "I have at, the same time, in order to soften the aspect of a treaty which is necessarily directed against France, recognized sufficiently the principle of concert with the legitimate sovereigns, so as to mark that it is not against the government or the nation, but against an eventual faction in France that our efforts are directed." These are ominous words and it is easy to see how the legitimist sovereigns, less disinterested and more selfish, might interpret this Alliance. For the more the concert and the cosmopolitan aspect was insisted upon the more would they regard it as a league for the repression of any popular outbursts or demands whatsoever. Other cir-

\* 15th October, 1815.



cumstances tended to preserve this delusion, and Castlereagh unconsciously acquiesced in the process.

Alexander now came forward with a proposed treaty of union of a vague and mystic type. The Czar's character was far beneath his talents and his consistency unequal to his abilities. With the deep piety of a religious mystic he united the superstitions and the morality of a Tartar; to sentiments, often liberal generous and enlightened, he joined the cunning, the selfishness and suspicion of a despot. He is said to have received his great plan from the lips of Madame de Krudener, an Egeria little qualified by her relations with her Numa to impart the counsels of religion and morality to the world. This treaty protested the desire of all the powers to become branches of one Christian nation to unite in harmony peace and love. It was signed only by the monarchs of Europe, but the English Prince Regent refused, as a ministerial countersignature was needed to every public document, though Castlereagh assured Alexander of his Master's sympathy and agreement with the pious and sublime principles declared. This treaty was afterwards known as the Holy Alliance, and was represented as a dark and secret league of banded despots against the liberties, not only of their own peoples, but of the world. But its original intention seems to have been altogether mystical and shadowy and due merely to the piety and self-importance of Alexander, who wished to keep both himself and religion before the eyes of Europe. Metternich despised it, Louis XVIII jested while he signed it, Ferdinand of Spain and the King of Prussia were alone sincere in their acquiescence. That it resembled the league formed at Aix-la-Chapelle is untrue and was in fact impossible, because in 1815 the views of Alexander and Metternich were completely divergent. The Diplomatist then abhorred the Jacobin views of the Czar, who actually talked of giving constitutions and forced Louis XVIII to grant a charter, when the other expressed his views on legitimacy! It must not,\* however, be forgotten that this so-called "Holy Alliance" treaty had an important retrospective influence, and did much to link together the despots when they came to unite the forces of repression and

\* Cp. Castlereagh to Stewart. Sept. 21, 1820. "There is another bond (between Austria, Russia, and Prussia). I mean that of the "Holy Alliance" under which discussions without limitation may be raised—but to this alliance you know Great Britain was not a party." Metternich used this treaty to draw closer the bands of union at Aix-la-Chapelle, Troppau and Laybach.

bigotry in their Congresses at Troppau and Aix-la-Chapelle. As yet, however, Castlereagh saw none of these tendencies, and openly panegyrised the Holy Alliance in the Commons, when it was attacked by Brougham, thus earning that reputation which soon made him the most detested of all British statesmen.

The real Holy\* Alliance, if we understand by that term the union of the continental sovereigns from 1818 onwards, issued from Aix-la-Chapelle. The Congress had been called partly for the purpose of withdrawing the Allied Garrisons from France, and admitting her into the catalogue of nations. The old alliance against Jacobinism in France was maintained, but the opportunity was now sought for drawing the governments into what Metternich called a "moral union." The agreement of the sovereigns would demonstrate to the revolutionists of all nations the hopelessness of resistance, and a congress of Great Powers would regulate Europe in the interests of all. These ideas, however crude, were at least memorable as the first practical attempt to form a general scheme of international politics. Though the intentions of the despots were not wholly disinterested they were not altogether ignoble, and certainly did not deserve the unmitigated hatred and detestation with which they have been treated. They aimed at a settlement of the peace of the world by confidential intercourse between the ministers and sovereigns of the Great Powers. But with three despotic rulers it will be seen that the league could only be contemplated as an alliance against liberty, unless England and France—who alone possessed representative systems—had a commanding influence. The Holy Alliance being formed to resist all change must therefore oppose all improvement, it only represented authority and petrification, and proposed to strangle all revolt against constituted authority at its birth. Napoleon's absolutism had at least a splendid side in its appeal to the emotions, its enlightened views, its efficiency and wisdom. But Metternich openly boasted that "Austria was not given to imagination." Nor could any seriously believe that the supreme intelligence of Europe was vested with the men who believed themselves its God-given rulers, in Alexander a brilliant political apostate, in Francis a commonplace country squire, or in Frederic-William the most insignificant of kings. Despite the great revolution the despots of Europe had learnt nothing and for-

\* Use the term "Holy Alliance" henceforward in this sense—the union of Austria Russia and Prussia, after 1818.



gotten nothing, except their one saving grace of benevolence. The paternal system of government has not succeeded where strong local institutions or feelings exist, and for this reason Austria has never conciliated or subdued Hungary. But the Holy Alliance proposed a sort of patriarchal system of government for all Europe, which could not have really applied to those nations where free constitutions or strong patriotic feeling still remained. These proved indeed to be to Metternich and Alexander what Kossuth and Deak have been to Francis Joseph. Metternich did not understand the changes created by the French Revolution in the ideas and hearts of men. He thought he could tear a page from the Book of History, and destroy both the memory and the hope of liberty. He believed that re-action could be permanent, that new ideals and opinions could be crushed, and the world again beguiled into the dreary inaction which characterised the home politics of all nations before 1789. The Holy Alliance was the completion of the system which would secure this end. Gentz, who was the literary organ of Metternich, thus described the Conference of Aix-la-Chapelle,\* "the intimate union of sovereigns, calme et constante dans son action, is the counterpoise to the disorder which turbulent spirits try to bring into human affairs: the nucleus of organized strength which this union presents is the barrier which Providence itself appears to have raised to preserve the old order of society, or at least to moderate or soften the changes which are indispensable." This then was the system proposed and nothing is more certain than that it would have broken down in practice and created more miseries than those it sought to check. The Holy Alliance, despite Gentz, neither calmed nor lessened the force of needful changes. It tended—whatever its original ideas—to check the improvement or education of the people, to enflame national feeling and prejudice, to uproot and cast aside every fresh plant of knowledge and wisdom. It attempted to close and dam a stream of immense volume and power. But the waters soon rose and swept away the dyke, carrying ruin and desolation far and wide into districts the flood would never have reached, had not the barrier served to gather and to concentrate its strength. A wiser policy was soon to be revealed which, by diverting the waters into fresh channels, used the very elements of disorder and inundation to fertilize and irrigate the soil.

\* *Memoirs of Metternich* III. 194.

The professions of Metternich were as yet studiously moderate towards the ambassadors of representative Governments. All his unrivalled powers of address and persuasion were employed to entrap the English minister into an assent to those vague generalizations which could be afterwards interpreted in his own sense. Castlereagh, as yet unsuspicious, welcomed the proposed "meetings, displays, repledges and reunions" as a new discovery in European government. The public opinion of England could with difficulty be sought upon this question, and Castlereagh's supremacy in the Cabinet appeared uncontrolled. But at this crisis he was checked by the most determined opposition in the Cabinet from the one English Statesman who saw both deep and far into the future, and foretold the dangerous engagements to which England might be committed. On September 15 Castlereagh lodged a vigorous protest against the idea of the Alliance solidaire being used to support established power, without considering the extent to which it was abused. But immediately afterwards we find him writing,\* "Alexander suggests all the powers of Europe being bound together on a common League guaranteeing to each other the existing order of things *in throne as in territories*, all being bound to march if requisite against the first power that offended. *I tried to present something which would meet somewhat his ideas which we could present to Parliament.*" Whatever he intended it is at least certain that he had provisionally agreed to a system of congresses meeting periodically to settle the affairs of Europe. He had also favoured an interpretation of the Ninth Article of Vienna, which extended it from an agreement among the Allies to suppress Jacobinism in France to a wider scheme of interference or guarantee. On October 19, the Cabinet met to discuss the general scheme. All but one agreed to the adoption of the system Castlereagh proposed, though there was some slight difference as to the modes and forms of the public declarations. But† Canning offered the most violent opposition to system as well as to forms. To combine against Jacobinism might be reasonable and sane, but to extend this to a system of Congresses to discuss and settle the general affairs of Europe, was a new and most questionable

\* Castlereagh to Bathurst Oct. 19, 1818, F.O. Continent 48.

† Castlereagh, Desp. XII. 56-7. Bathurst to Castlereagh Oct. 20, 1818. Quoted by Fyffe. Bathurst was Colonial Secretary but wrote here, instead of the under-Foreign Secretary, as the latter could not attend the Cabinet.



innovation. He denied the interpretation put upon the Ninth Article of Vienna. "It would involve England in Continental politics, whereas our true policy has always been not to interfere except in great emergencies and then with a commanding force." He foresaw and foretold that this was really an attempt to place the lesser States in subjection, and that the meetings might be scenes of cabal and intrigue. Last of all he stated as a popular argument "that the people of this country may be taught to look with great jealousy for their liberties, if our Court is engaged in meetings with great despotic monarchs, deliberating upon what degree of Revolutionary spirit may endanger the public security, and therefore require the interference of the Alliance." Subsequent events proved the astonishing insight of Canning. His opposition was as strenuous as it was unexpected, and he stood absolutely alone. Wellington says Canning was usually very silent in the Cabinet, but if he gave an opinion adhered to it with extraordinary tenacity, and argued with such heat and resentment that it was impossible to avoid personal altercation if you opposed him. We can imagine the flash of his eye, the scorn of his lip, and his indignant eloquence on this occasion. Here no intoxicating applause awaited him from supporters, no words of his would ever reach the outer world, he stood alone in the face of the whole Cabinet for principles to which he clung and against a system whose danger he foresaw. His prescience was extraordinary and its arguments disclose all the leading tenets of what was soon and happily for his country to be not only his, but England's foreign policy. Even had he never held the seals of Foreign Secretary he would deserve immortal honour for this protest at a moment so heavy laden with the destinies of both England and Europe.

The immediate success of Canning's action was very considerable, Castlereagh's eyes were opened and he realized the danger of secrecy and concealment, and of a system of international regulation so vague and indeterminate, which might be construed into binding engagements for special purposes.\* Liverpool now wrote to warn him against secret agreements, declared that discussions of such questions must be in the British Parliament, and compelled even Castlereagh to recognize the force of public opinion. This new influence is seen in the public manifestoes of the Congress, which declared

\* Nov., 1818, Wellington. Suppl. Desp. XII. 830.

their intention of respecting the rights of smaller states, and suggested the assembly of meetings for maintaining the general peace. But they expressly added that no such meetings had been arranged, and no new obligations had been incurred. Castlereagh had been induced to limit England to vague promises of co-operation and sympathy with her Allies. No unprejudiced person can doubt that Canning may claim a very great share of merit for thus restraining the action of England. It was not all that he desired, but it is equally certain that but for his bold and resolute stand Castlereagh would have bound England, if not to the Holy Alliance, at least to the system of Congresses; and thus incurred obligations it would have been difficult to disclaim. Canning's suspicions as to the proposed union are in fact the turning point of our foreign policy. Henceforth Castlereagh slowly began to assume a more isolated and resolute attitude in Continental affairs. Hitherto Metternich had cajoled and dazzled him, henceforth, though he was still devoted to the cause of order and an enemy to all change, his suspicions of the Holy Alliance increased, till they eventually broke out into open remonstrance.

The true policy of England had always been that of non-interference, with regard to the internal affairs of other countries, from the days of Walpole. Pitt had rejected this policy after 1793, but Canning had clearly re-adopted it from 1807 to 9. Despite great opposition and obvious disadvantages he had\* refused to interfere in the internal arrangements of Portugal, to regulate the Regency which had directed affairs in the name of the Portuguese crown, or to define its relation with the irresponsible Juntos. All the evils of the French revolution he held to spring from active propagandism, and the attempts of France to force its own internal system upon other nations. Each nation, he wrote in one of his earliest letters, had a right from God to choose its own form of government, but not to disturb other countries. Any attempts at forcible interference with their internal affairs, unless in the case of direct peril to the nation which intervened, were dangerous and opposed to international law. Canning held that for these reasons Napoleon was an outlaw and a tyrant attacking the Liberty of the world. England had no more right to impose its own constitution on other nations, than France had to press Republicanism or Napoleonic despotism upon the world. When

\* Portugal F.O. 67. Espy. Nov. 18, 1808.



Lord William Bentinck and an English force were in Sicily, and sought to erect a constitutional government (1813), Canning commented as follows:—"It was not because we carried in our bosoms the image of our constitution that we should expect to see it reflected in every other country . . . But it could not be expected that sixteen thousand bayoneted philosophers would suddenly produce the effect, which in England had been the result of the Revolutions and the accumulated wisdom of ages." He had grasped a truth which few then understood, that governments can only be gradually altered and improved, that violent and sudden changes are often for the worse, and that any impulse or movement, to be successful or popular, must proceed from the people and the government itself. Constitutions were the slow growth of the character of a people, not card palaces erected in a moment by hot-headed revolutionists or ill informed foreigners. Attempts at external interference were mischievous, and probably harmed the cause they tried to serve; whether it was a despot who intervened to repress liberty, or a republic which came forward to proclaim it. Thus it will be seen that Canning's previous policy and convictions led him to detest congresses of the type proposed, and his foresight now told him that, in the present instance, they could lead to interferences of only one kind, that of a coalition of despots against liberty.

On the other hand, Castlereagh's record at the Foreign Office had not been a consistent one. Pitt had in later years abandoned the policy of non-intervention, and Castlereagh following him had rebuked, instructed, or lectured the various Governments of Europe. He had intervened in their internal affairs, he had agreed to the establishment of a constitution in Sicily. Yet at the very same moment that he sent a British fleet to aid Sweden in the conquest of Norway, he refused to retain the Sicilian constitution, and suddenly revived the doctrine of non-interference! At the same time he approved of a secret treaty by which Metternich bound Ferdinand IV. to maintain absolutism at Naples, thus consenting to a most definite intervention. This idea is also expressed in the following words: \* "I am sure it is better to *retard* than accelerate the action of this most hazardous principle (liberty)

\* Castlereagh to Bentinck, 1814, Desp. x. 18. Contrast Canning in 1821 (March 20th) "I see the principles of liberty are in operation and shall be one of the last to attempt to restrain them." The date (1821) is of no importance, for Canning's principles knew no change.

which is abroad." He had at least not opposed the repressive policy of Metternich, and he viewed the riots in England as part of the Liberal movement in Europe, and made little attempt to hold the sovereigns to their promise of granting constitutions. But from 1818 onwards the intentions of the Holy Alliance became clearer, Castlereagh began to doubt and suspect, and gradually to adopt the policy of non-interference. The Congress at Aix-la-Chapelle seriously discussed the project of sending a combined force to restore to Spain her revolted American Colonies. Castlereagh had already declared that his Government would give no sweeping pledge in this matter. He now did his best to prevent an application of armed force, but wrote to Sir Henry Wellesley that the Powers had taught Spain to expect that \* "they would ultimately embark in a general negotiation, and finally manage our scruples, so as to procure for Spain some species of coercive appui." He seems to have made no open protest, but merely to have used secret diplomatic means to avert this result. This was little indeed, but was at least an improvement on his previous policy.

No sovereign, who had been present at Aix-la-Chapelle, left it without a resolve to maintain the existing systems more firmly than before—and the flood of reaction overspread all Europe. The impressionable Czar repented his former liberal follies, and fell completely under the influence of Metternich's system. Metternich saw revolution everywhere, even in the Wartburg Festival, where a number of jovial and not too sober students crowned themselves with laurel, and drank the health of Luther and confusion to tyrants. This was used as an argument to overthrow or modify the constitutions of several smaller States! The Austrian influence drew Germany tighter in the bonds of the Confederation, and her timid kings and princes consented to the establishment of a central commission of inquiry into "demagogic intrigues." Students and professors were expelled the universities, gymnastics were forbidden, as they incited to sedition, and men were loaded with chains for uttering a rash word or wearing a tricolor. Metternich disclaimed any selfish views, all was in the cause of Europe and order. Persecution for religious heresy had been the mainstay of government in the age of faith, persecution for political differences was to be its

\* Continent. 17. F.O. Records—quoted by Dorman II. 243, Nov. 29, 818.



corner-stone in the political Counter Reformation. The Commission was the new Inquisition, the attacks upon books and newspapers were the Index Expurgatorius. The temper of the despots may be gathered from \* a little incident. The Czar was astonished by a revolt in one of his regiments, and attributed it to the introduction of "The Lancasterian system of education into the batallions." His brother despot, the Emperor Francis, condoled with him and congratulated himself on always having forbidden it. He had no objection to soldiers intending to be non-commissioned officers learning reading and writing he said, but any "general system of instruction was highly objectionable." The Czar agreed and remarked mournfully "C'est que votre Majesté a toujours agi beaucoup mieux que moi." When these two despots were the leaders of the Holy Alliance and were supported by Prussia, whom Canning wrote down as "a downright Grenadier with no politics but those of the drum-head and cat o' nine tails," it will be seen that the Holy Alliance could have but one policy.

The great movement of Liberalism, which swept over Southern Europe in 1820, flowed from many sources. The clear intentions of the Holy Alliance, the odious system of repression established everywhere, brought back the ideals of the French Revolution, and even fond regrets for Napoleon's enlightened though despotic rule. The arid wisdom of to-day has discovered that Liberty means nothing, and therefore that it was most foolish for men to strive after it. Had these metaphysicians lived under Metternich, a rash utterance and the inside of an Austrian prison might have convinced them that Liberty offers some real advantages. But even if liberty means nothing the supremely important fact, influencing the whole history of these times, is that men thought and acted as if it meant something. The Elizabethan heroes exhausted their blood and their toil in their search for the fabled golden city of Manoa, but an incident in their pursuit of the unreal was the destruction of the power of Spain. With a nobler zeal and enthusiasm many now sought the fair vision of liberty, and in their search produced results far other than they dreamed of. If everything else comprised under the name of Liberty were airy and impracticable, there were at least two most definite and practical demands. The first was for popular government or a representative constitution giving large powers to the people ; the second was for external liberty

\* Nov. 15, 1820. F.O. Austria 160.

or for the freedom of each State to manage its own affairs, irrespective of foreign interference, and of attempts to control its internal institutions or relations with other States. It will be seen that the first demand led to the second, for when Naples had a free constitution it was not likely to endure the servility, to which Metternich had subjected its miserable king Ferdinand. The Holy Alliance had shown its hostility to all the smaller States, had interfered with their concerns, and proclaimed that it would uphold Legitimacy and the existing order. Hence when revolutions broke out in Naples and Sicily, Portugal and Spain, the despots trembled on their thrones.

Even before the Liberal outbursts, Alexander had been making overtures to draw closer the "moral union" of the Great Powers, but when Ferdinand of Spain accepted an extremely democratic constitution from the revolutionists he redoubled his efforts. Castlereagh had gradually been drifting away from the Holy Alliance since Canning's warnings. But as late as Jan. 14, 1820, he wrote to Stewart (his brother the ambassador at Vienna): "The principle of non-interference has been strongly laid down, but it has not been put forward as an universal proposition." But the proposals of Alexander for a joint intervention of the Powers caused him to take a somewhat different attitude. The famous State paper of \* May 5th, 1820, is the foundation of all our subsequent foreign policy, as was admitted by Canning himself. As it appears never to have been printed in entirety a summary of its contents may be given. This State paper declares in the clearest manner the attitude of England towards Spain, and "her intention to abstain from any reunion of the sovereigns or the appearance of surveillance." It deplores the general danger and instability from the principles afloat, and from the circumstances that several States "are now casting their Governments anew upon the representative principle; but the notion of revising, limiting or regulating the course of such experiments by foreign council or by foreign force would be as dangerous to avow as impossible to execute." Turning back to Spain it declares some of the acts of Ferdinand VII. to have been "odious,"

\* Austria F.O. 148. Stapleton points out Canning did not describe this paper as written by Castlereagh but as "found in the office." Many of the expressions used strongly resemble Canning's own style, and his curious description of the paper, whatever it means, certainly does not imply that he knew nothing of it in 1820. But whether he actually wrote it or no, the mark of his hand and influence is upon it.



and states that England would never consent to employ force to reduce either Spain or her colonies. "If ever the dreadful moral contagion should extend to Germany, or the flame of military revolt burst forth there\*" "England would never consent to send her troops to suppress it. "After dealing with these special cases the State paper again defines England's attitude. She will not pledge herself beforehand to any exertion whatever in Continental affairs. She does not desire to abandon the Alliance, in the sense in which it was originally understood at Vienna—that of guaranteeing the territorial system of Europe. But political or general guarantees a Representative Government cannot give "without exciting a suspicion that they have made a surrender of the first principles, on which their Government is founded." England must act not by "the laws other Powers may think fit to lay down. . . . but from those maxims which a system of government, strongly popular and national, has irresistibly imposed upon us." Finally it ends by reserving independence of action, while hoping that the moral union of the Powers will continue. England will not act upon abstract or speculative principles, or accept any other construction of England's engagements than that in which the original Alliance was explained to Parliament.

This was the State paper, which was always referred to by diplomatists as the landmark of all our future policy, from its decisive severance with that of the past half dozen years. It is difficult to read it without perceiving that it is merely an elaborate statement of Canning's arguments in the Cabinet on Oct. 19, 1818. He then stood alone, and Castlereagh was surprised at his interference and his warnings. The deference to national opinion, the uncompromising statement of non-interference, the restricted interpretation of the Ninth Article of Vienna, the dislike of the system of reunions, all these he then expressed. Castlereagh took some eighteen months to formulate and accept these views. As Canning left England in August, 1820, and returned only to resign in December, his active influence upon Castlereagh practically ceased with this State paper. Canning's Whig admirers—who have been followed by many historians—held that he suddenly reversed Castlereagh's whole policy, when he accepted the seals in 1822. The Tories and Castlereagh's advocates have

\* That it should be needful to make such statements as this is of deep significance.

perceived that the change in our policy took place before that date, and have rashly assumed that Castlereagh\* was *alone* responsible for that change. The passage already quoted from Castlereagh's own despatches, together with this State paper, completely disproves this view. But some other proofs of Canning's influence on the course of affairs from 1818-20 may be given. Besides his influence in the Cabinet, Canning was present at Aix-la-Chapelle during the later part of the Conference, and throughout the period acted as a kind of under Foreign Secretary,† frequently advising and consulting with Castlereagh. But the most important proof of his influence, next to that already given, comes from Stratford Canning, who records in his‡ Diary (28th May, 1820), "I congratulated him (George Canning) on the line which I knew had been taken (by England) with the Allied Courts on the subject of the late revolutionary events in Spain, and *as I had reason to believe from a former conversation with him, in obedience to his suggestions.* "Yes," he said, *we shall have no more congresses, thank God!*" "They were all very well for such matters as the disputes between Baden and Bavaria, *but he had always been convinced that they would prove useless for the settlement of any such dislocation as that of Spain.* The Emperor of Russia still had a fancy for them, and was wanting the Allied Powers to agree beforehand upon some plan of action in case of the King of France's death, or any new explosion in the country." It is clear that Castlereagh cannot claim originality for a change of policy, which was urged by Canning in deference to principles and convictions which he had put into practise at an earlier period, while Castlereagh had seen fit to disregard them. That Castlereagh would gradually have been led to abandon the Holy Alliance is probable, but except for the insight and influence of Canning he would certainly have been soon§ "entangled in the toils of concerts, which apparently mean

\* E. g., J. A. R. Marriot. Canning, p. 83. "It was Castlereagh, and *Castlereagh alone*, who prevented the international acceptance of the doctrine of interference promulgated at Aix-la-Chapelle." No one, who has read even the published part of Castlereagh's Despatches with attention, can accept this.

† For proof of this v. desp. of Castlereagh's to Stewart Dec. 4, 1820, F.O. 148. Stapleton A.G. : "Canning and his Times, p. 319."

‡ Life of Stratford Canning. S. L. Poole I. 291. This diary is a contemporary record, *not* a recollection embodied in Memoirs.

§ Oct. 28, 1820, Castlereagh to Stewart.



nothing but which are afterwards interpreted to mean everything, and which might tend to embark England in a system of measures, from which she must afterwards have to retire with disgrace, avowing herself duped."

Piedmont, Portugal, Spain, Naples and Sicily were now all in revolt against their sovereigns, and the Holy Alliance was meditating action against them. The protests of England, the inaction of France, and the difficulties of immediate action postponed the proposed intervention in Spain. But the revolt of Naples and Sicily had been completely successful, and their king Ferdinand was now distinguishing himself by taking the most dramatic and fervent oaths to a constitution, which he never had the slightest intention of maintaining. The seeds of the Congress of Vienna now bore evil fruit. The secret society of the Carbonari, which extended beyond the limits of Naples and openly worked for the unity of Italy, unfortunately gave some colour to the plea of universal revolutionist propaganda. Castlereagh had approved a secret treaty in 1815, by which Metternich bound Ferdinand IV. to maintain absolutism in Naples, and he now, therefore, consented to the separate intervention of Austria, and announced that he would not embarrass her, if she disclaimed all idea of aggrandisement or of altering existing treaties. He considered the disturbances\* "a sectarian conspiracy and military revolt against a mild and paternal government." But faithful to the State paper of May 5, he protested against any joint-interference, though he approved of Austrian action. This joint intervention, however, Alexander was unwilling to abandon, and a conference of Sovereigns and Ministers was called at Troppau. Stewart was sent from Vienna with† "positive instructions to take no part, but to listen and report." Capodistrias, the eloquent minister of the Czar, talked so much of the new moral union for the peace of the world that Metternich, who wished to crush the Naples disturbance at once, grew impatient and requested him to "leave out the parts where the Apocalypse showed itself." The more earthly results of the Conference were embodied in the secret treaty of‡ Nov. 19, 1820, signed by Austria, Russia and Prussia,

\* July 29, 1820. Castlereagh to Stewart, F.O. Continent 43.

† Oct. 20, 1820. Stewart to Castlereagh—"I shall be a complete nonentity at Troppau. My presence may afford the countenance of England openly which Metternich desires." Could anything be more humiliating?

‡ Cont. F.O. 43, also quoted by Dorman II, 286.

which more than justified all the fears entertained by Canning two years before. It began with the usual phrases of unction, expressing the wish of the three Allies to preserve civilisation, justice and law under the Christian morality. It then announced that signatories will not recognize any change ordered by an "illegal" Government, thus placing the doctrine of Legitimacy in its sharpest form. Finally the Powers pledged themselves to a joint intervention in Italy to give "liberty to the King of Naples." A more guarded statement was made in the famous document of Dec. 8, "the circular of Troppau," which affirmed the general union and the resolve of the Powers to repress the movements in Naples and Spain, because they were an infraction of the settlement of Vienna. They announced that they would not recognize Governments begotten by sedition, and could only treat with kings. They had summoned the King of Naples to meet them at Laybach, "in order to free the will of His Majesty." They reaffirmed in no obscure terms Legitimacy and the Divine Right of Kings to grant constitutions by their personal will, and to refuse them to pressure of any kind. They concluded by declaring these doctrines to be the legitimate outcome of the Alliance of 1815. Against this Castlereagh immediately protested in a long Memoir, denying the principles this circular proclaimed. He seems at last to have decided to break off from the moral union with its vague generalities.\* He wrote to Stewart, "If they (Austria, Russia and Prussia) will be theorists we must act in separation. I shall personally grieve for any schism in an alliance to which I am so cordially attached." But he adds, "better look our difficulties in the face, than get entangled in the labyrinth to which the protocols will conduct us."

But though Castlereagh had at last burst the bonds of the Holy Alliance, he did not desire to reveal it to the world. He feared the "open schism" in the moral union would encourage the Liberals in all countries. Some parts of the Troppau Circular, which had been forwarded to the Ambassadors of the Three Powers, found their way into the Papers.† Castlereagh

\* Austria F.O. 148. Dec. 17, 1820.

† Stapleton, *Pol. Life I*, 40, says Castlereagh made no open protest against the circular. This is not true, he had protested, but only in private. How long he would have deferred his public protest these quotations may determine. F.O. 158, Austria, Jan. 19, 1821, he writes to Stewart informing him of the publication in the papers, and bidding him tell the Allies "it was impossible to avoid these (public) explanations." Else-



then replied by publishing the famous note of Jan. 19, 1821. This was a vigorously worded protest based on the State paper of 5th May, 1820. But it aroused extraordinary interest and notoriety throughout the world, as being the first intimation to the public of the changed attitude of Castlereagh. The divisions of the Allies were revealed to the world, and Metternich was overwhelmed for a moment with rage and fear, that the aspect of union would no longer give an appearance of solidity to the Alliance. But the despots now assembled at Laybach, with Stewart again acting the ignoble part of observer and informer. Ferdinand was easily persuaded to revoke his constitution, an Austrian Army was sent to restore him to his throne, occupying Piedmont on the way and suppressing the revolution there. A'Court, our ambassador at Naples, now proceeded to enlighten his chief on what Castlereagh had called the "mild and paternal" character of the Naples government. The restored and perjured Ferdinand IV. was the real agent of repression, and frequently disregarded the advice of the ambassadors of the Holy Alliance. But to the latter was attributed by the people every act of government \* "from the arbitrary arrest of the criminals of State down to the order which shuts up the schools and condemns the little misses of Naples to learn nothing but sewing and embroidery, from the decree which exposes any individual to ten years' imprisonment for possessing a Gibbon or a Montesquieu, to that which establishes a similar punishment for anyone making a party into the country of more than five. . . . Thank God, England has nothing to say to anything that is now going on." It is, however, unfortunate that Castlereagh did not remonstrate, and A'Court especially mentions the great effect a protest from England might have had in Sicily.

England's separation from the Councils of the Holy Alliance had resulted in an impotent isolation. At first Metternich had been terrified at the rent in the hitherto seamless garment, but he gradually recovered confidence. It is the gravest condemnation of Castlereagh's policy during these years, that † Wellington wrote to Canning from Verona

where he speaks of them as "being forced upon us." F.O. 148, Austria, Dec. 16, 1820, he says if the Powers did want to assert these doctrines "might they not have been recorded in the Ministerial Notes?" *not* in a circular.

\* Austria F.O. 159. A'Court June 6, 1821, to Castlereagh.

† Nov. 5, 1823, Continent, F.O. 48.

"There is a very general feeling in the corps diplomatique assembled here that England separated herself from the Allies during the affairs of Naples very unnecessarily, (and) that they experienced no inconvenience from such a separation." The attempts of Castlereagh to prevent joint-intervention were not successful, for Metternich did not move till a Russian army assembled in Galicia to render assistance to the Austrians if required. Lastly he failed to induce the Holy Alliance to repudiate or modify their doctrines. On May 12, 1821, these Holy Patriarchs concluded their conference at Laybach by issuing a Circular affirming their intention to uphold the existing social order. "Useful or necessary changes in legislation and in the administration of States ought only to emanate from the the free-will and the intelligent and well-weighed conviction of those whom God has rendered responsible for power." Again the Holy Allies had proclaimed the Divine Right of kings and of "legitimacy." Their practical application of these principles had been shown at Naples. Their effect was now seen in a new edition of \* Marten's great work on international law, which, applying these new doctrines to state-rights, sacrificed the principle of national independence without which no law can be conceived. The "Holy Alliance" denied altogether that the people were the origin of power, a doctrine of all representative governments, and had so far influenced thought and action, that a great jurist had acquiesced in the doctrine by which Austria had forced Ferdinand on Naples at the sword's point. In spite of Castlereagh's open protests against the doctrines of Troppau, and of his severance from the Councils of the Allies at Laybach, they advanced more extravagant pretensions than before. Castlereagh, while protesting in private, made no further public response.

During 1821-2, the Greeks raised the standard of independence against the Turks, and an assault on their Embassy brought Russia to the verge of war with the Sublime Port. The disturbances in Spain continued to increase, and thus rendered the reduction of her colonies to the old obedience almost impossible. For 1822 Metternich therefore designed an imposing reunion of the powers, and another congress to discuss the European situation, at which he desired the personal attendance of both Castlereagh and George IV. "It was so necessary," wrote the Emperor

\* *Precis du droit des Gens*. Vol. III. c. II. 80. Gottingen, 1821. The edition of 1798 lays down an entirely different doctrine.



Francis, "for good brothers to join hand-in-hand for promoting their common interests and the Welfare of Europe." Castlereagh accepted for himself but diplomatically replied that cares of State engrossed the sole attention of His Royal Master, though of course the real reason why that indolent voluptuary declined the invitation, was that Castlereagh did not wish to compromise England in the eyes of the world, by marking a too complete union with the Holy Alliance. The instructions drawn up by Castlereagh (now Marquis of Londonderry) for his own use at Vienna were his last act, and on August 9th, 1822, he died by his own hand.

Few statesmen have ever been so assailed as Castlereagh, the basest perfidy was freely imputed to him, and the Liberals of the day regarded him as a kind of compromise between Caesar Borgia and the devil. This has of late produced a reaction in his favour, but the charges against him are grave and many. His domestic record is almost the worst of any notable English statesman, he was the chief agent in the open and shameless bribery which carried the Irish Union, the enforcer of an oppressive policy at home, and, after His Royal Master, the chief deviser of the persecutions inflicted on the unhappy Queen Caroline. As for his foreign policy many contemporaries seriously \* believed that he conducted a secret correspondence with Metternich, differing entirely from the public despatches and designed to throw dust in the eyes of Parliament, that he really agreed with the Allies, whilst publicly he protested. There is evidence enough to require explanation and cause suspicion but not to secure a conviction. Candour must acquit Castlereagh of intentional deception. He had approved the secret treaty by which Metternich bound Ferdinand to maintain absolutism at Naples. He had favoured Metternich's "system" of government. To the end of his life he absurdly viewed the revolts in Greece against Turkish tyranny, the Liberal movements in Italy and Spain, and the riots in England as parts of the same conflagration, and produced by the same

\* Greville, Journals I, 105. A secret correspondence (often shown to Metternich) does exist. But after 1820 it only differs, unfortunately for Greville, from the public despatches in that its protests and remonstrances are more emphatic. The most important evidence against Castlereagh in my opinion is that Sir Robert Wilson, a partial but a very well-informed witness, seems to have believed in his perfidy. v. letters in Ad. MSS-30,132—passim—Greville or Bentinck one could afford to neglect.

causes. "The monster Radicalism still lives in England," he wrote to Metternich in 1819. He listened patiently to Metternich's lectures on the danger of employing men of liberal opinions, and to his denunciation of Lord William Bentinck's policy in Sicily, and of Sir William A'Court's recognition of Ferdinand as a constitutional king. His mind was naturally of a somewhat absolutist cast, he liked confidential intercourse between rulers, and sometimes held verbal communications with Metternich. His secret letters to Stewart, of which some were shown to Metternich, are full of such phrases as the "difficulties of responsible government." Russia, he wrote, is neither "*confined by a parliament nor a free constitution.*" To have approved Metternich's 1815 treaty with Ferdinand and to have used such phrases as these seems indefensible for a constitutional statesman. The terms, in which he spoke of parliament and our constitution to foreign diplomatists, were certainly most ill-advised—and as we shall see—produced the most disastrous results. He hated publicity in diplomatic affairs and despised popular clamour. Indifference to public opinion is sometimes the greatest of virtues, but its only justification lies in complete success. Bismarck defied almost the whole Prussian nation, but humbled Austria and united Germany. Castlereagh over-ruled the popular wishes but neglected our true interests at Vienna and so lowered our prestige in subsequent years that England stood but fourth in a great Confederation.

These accusations are heavy, but overwhelming evidence supports them. Yet prejudice must not intervene, for Castlereagh was the minister of England and a patriot in his own way, even if his views were narrow and illiberal. He seems to have concealed more from parliament than a constitutional minister should. But we must not assume that he intentionally deceived parliament as to the general aspect of his policy, because he did not himself foresee its subsequent tendencies. From the time of Canning's first protest he began to hesitate and from the middle of 1820 onwards he opposed the Holy Alliance, though his action was criticized and even censured by his brother Stewart. He was devoted to the cause of order though, after Canning warned him that the "system" clashed with England's interests and extended the engagements of 1815, he gradually adopted a new policy. One of the greatest difficulties, with which Canning had subsequently to contend, was to convince Metternich and Alexander that he was in



earnest. Castlereagh, who had\* vacillated so often between interference and non-interference, between favouring and protesting against congresses, found it impossible. In the midst of his protests he always stopped to assure Metternich of his complete confidence in the present intentions of the upholders of the Holy Alliance, and to say that it was only the system and its tendencies which he feared. He approved or at least winked at the Austrian intervention in Naples, which was in effect that of the whole Holy Alliance. As his excuse for not joining in the Holy Alliance was always the difficulties and restraints of the English Constitution, Metternich not unnaturally concluded that he hated and despised both parliament and people. Both Chateaubriand and Metternich persisted in thinking that his public and avowed intentions were merely shams to amuse the English people, and that he awaited only a decisive parliamentary majority to tear off the mask.† Chateaubriand spoke of Castlereagh's "instinct for despotism and secret contempt for constitutional liberties." Metternich dreamed of an English Ministry, with Castlereagh as premier and Liverpool and the other Liberals expelled.‡ On hearing of his death he wrote "he was devoted to me in heart and spirit, not only from personal inclination but also from conviction. He was my second self." We know now that for at least two years Castlereagh's policy had been directly opposed to that of Metternich, and that he was deeply suspicious of his aims and system. Castlereagh, vainly striving to convince the diplomatists of the Continent of his sincerity and changed opinions, and dying without having achieved success, is a figure tragic in its impotence and pathos.

A miserable death and an amiable private character cannot extenuate the failures of a statesman at the Bar of History. Castlereagh was a man of courage and strength of character. If not a great he was at least a very able administrator and departmental chief. In small matters his firmness was often shown with great effect, and he did splendid service at the War Office and in uniting the Allies against Napoleon. Here his aims were perfectly

\* It was this kind of policy Moore pictured not unhappily (allowing for bias and satirical licence) in the line—

"Half goose and half vulture like Lord Castlereagh."

† Memoirs IV. 85.

‡ Memoirs of Metternich III. p. 555, p. 591.

clear and he never faltered. How is it then that a man of his resolution should have pursued in diplomacy a course so tortuous and inconsistent? The explanation is that his character was stronger than his intellect, his will-power infinitely superior to his acuteness and perception. Poorly supplied with knowledge and ideas and narrow in prejudice he was unable to grasp or formulate great schemes of policy, or to gauge the force of great movements at a time of unexampled turbulence and revolution. The hopeless confusion of ideas,\* prevalent in his speeches and in some of his despatches, seems to have extended in a less degree to his views on la haute Politique, so that he looked to others for explanation and advice. He groped clumsily in the dark, and was forced to beg oil from others, to kindle the lamp of his understanding. Thus at Vienna he was first influenced by Alexander and then by Talleyrand, later he was impressed by Metternich and then by Canning, at one time by his hatred of revolution, at another by his love of country. Hence his policy till 1818 is a series of shifts and vacillations, in which Metternich's influence is predominant. The next two years are years of slow estrangement from the "system," a process initiated by the warnings of Canning. From 1820 onward, his position is that of the famous State paper of the 5th May of that year. Without Canning he would probably have approximated to this change of policy, but not without more delay, and not without further entanglement in the mazy labyrinths of Metternich's generalizations and plans of general intervention. His policy forms no compact whole and is one in which no leading principles can consistently be traced, though the measures of his last two years were on the whole clear and determined. "Away with the cant of 'Measures not men,'" said Canning on one occasion, "the vain theory that it is the harness and not the horses that drag the chariot along. If the distinction

\* Bell says Castlereagh never drew up a despatch which Pitt did not alter. The confusion in his speeches was not only in a few ludicrous or isolated phrases as —'men turning their backs on themselves;' 'the constitutional principle wound up in the bowels of the monarchical;' or a 'Herculean labour producing a Hercules'; or 'the level of loyalty slopes the stream of hydraheaded faction *kicks the beam*.' Creevey calls his speech of 16 Feb., 1822, 'such hash as was never delivered by man—the folly of it—a miracle. . . . I thought I should have died when he spoke gravely of the increased cleanliness from the increased excise revenue on soap.' These absurdities are slight but useful indications, if we do not exaggerate or press them too far."



must be taken men are everything, measures comparatively nothing. I speak of times of difficulty and danger, when systems are shaken, when general rules of conduct fail." At the present time of peril the measures of Canning were likely to be better executed by himself, than by one burdened with Castlereagh's record of failure and inconsistency. Canning had the intuitive perceptions, the humour, and the imagination of a great statesman, in addition to a courage and strength of will at least as great as that of Castlereagh. Moreover, he was admirably qualified to awake and sustain a popular interest in foreign policy. Yet it is difficult not to feel pity for the unhappy and unfortunate statesman, who has served only to enhance the glory of his successor, and whose memory has been delivered to the execration of mankind. As Castlereagh's coffin was carried from the hearse to its last resting place beside the tombs of Pitt and Fox, some of the crowd raised shouts of exultation which echoed loudly through every corner of the Abbey!

## CHAPTER IX

### THE CONGRESS OF VERONA AND THE INVASION OF SPAIN

1822-3

CANNING accepted the seals of the Foreign Office, and the leadership of the Commons, between the 13th and 16th of September, 1822. His attitude towards the Government between 1820-2 has often been misinterpreted. It has even been held that he refused to allow Liverpool to press him upon the King,\* because he disapproved of the Government's foreign policy, but it is more likely that his deference to the Crown was his sole reason for not wishing to re-enter the Cabinet. He could not but be conscious that the Government was slowly approximating to his views, though it is certain his own private opinion could not have favoured their attitude towards Austrian intervention in Italy. Indeed he avoided specific approval, confining himself to large generalities, in a speech on the conduct of the government on March 20, 1821. He indirectly pronounced the doctrines preached by the Holy Alliance at Troppau and Laybach as "foolish and pedantic." "He saw that the principles of liberty were in operation and should be one of the last individuals to attempt to restrain them." But our best method of doing this was by absolute neutrality, not enforcing our own constitution on other nations, or supposing in the foolish spirit of romance that we could regenerate Europe. Here is the sketch of that famous "system" of holding the balance, with an equal hand, between the conflicting principles of Legitimacy and Democracy, which formed the keystone of Canning's policy. That he already realised its danger is clear from his comparison of it to "a plank across a

\* Stapleton E. J. *Correspce.* I p. 9-22. His disapproval would in fact probably have been an additional inducement to resume office and restore his influence in the Cabinet.



roaring stream," and his mention of the attempts which might be made to bear it down on one side or the other. Castlereagh, who had been forced by circumstances like the unwilling schoolboy to learn his lesson, never seems to have realized the new policy in quite so conscious or definite a shape. He was content with merely marking the difference between England and the Holy Alliance. Canning's policy when fully developed was enlightened arbitration, Castlereagh never showed a sign that he had advanced further than unenlightened isolation.

Early in 1820 Canning, who hated European Congresses, had expressed a hope that there would be no more of them. In the State paper of May 5th Castlereagh had been so far influenced by Canning as to accept completely the principle of non-intervention and to dissociate himself from the Congresses, and Canning's policy therefore only differed from that of the Government in emphasis, foresight and vigour. Had he himself indeed been at the Foreign Office it is probable that England would have refused to attend at Troppau or Laybach. But our envoys went only in the ignoble capacity of spectators—who committed themselves to nothing. His influence as a member of the Cabinet had been great, he could hardly have expected more than he had obtained, for Castlereagh was at length, even if tardily, pursuing the right policy. The principles were now good, if their execution was amiss. There would be no return to the old system, and Canning probably felt only that kind of disagreement and impatience with the Cabinet that a cautious Radical to-day might feel with Liberal colleagues. Wellington left London immediately after Canning accepted the seals, so that he could not have prevented our sending a representative to the Congress. Even had he wished to reverse Castlereagh's policy completely, whereas he desired only to strengthen and supplement it, he could hardly have changed or altered a memorandum, already approved by the Cabinet and sanctioned by the King, and transferred by Lord Bathurst as instructions to Wellington the day after \* (Sept. 14) Canning had definitely accepted,

\* The very signature of Bathurst to these instructions would prove this. He was acting as substitute until Canning or another was appointed, and could not have signed this document once the Foreign Secretary was installed. As Wellington left London Sept. 17th and Canning declared he had only been in office 48 hours when Wellington started—he cannot have been in the Foreign Office on the 14th when the instructions were despatched. He could not, therefore, in any way have controlled or altered them.

and apparently before he had been at the office. But the policy contained therein was modified by supplementary and qualifying instructions from Canning, which were not all necessitated or produced by additional information.

The Congress was originally designed to meet at Vienna, and afterwards at Verona to discuss Italian affairs, from which England meant to hold aloof. Castlereagh's instructions on Italy were that the English envoy should limit himself to acquiring information, and to seeing that nothing was done contrary to the treaties and existing system of Europe. But Canning instructed Wellington to press Metternich for the speedy evacuation of Piedmont by the Austrian troops. He defined the attitude of England towards Italy as one of "neutrality but not of indifference," and in a despatch of later date he speaks of the Austrian interference as being\* "protested against" by England at Laybach, which certainly seems to put a most Canningite construction on the attitude of Castlereagh. On October 15th Canning transmitted a pamphlet to Wellington, which described the sufferings and persecutions of the Vaudois in Piedmont. He instructs him to inquire into the "grievances inflicted on this harmless and meritorious people," and on finding their truth to make representations. "Your Grace is to express the interest His Majesty takes in the welfare of this Protestant community, and to endeavour to obtain assurance for their good treatment in the future, for toleration for their worship and respect for their privileges, as the British government have in former times thought it their right and their duty to require." These last words show that Canning was thinking of that glorious time, when the strong arm of Cromwell was uplifted in righteous indignation to stay the persecution of these same poor Vaudois, and when his famous Latin Secretary penned the noblest of his sonnets against the "bloody Piedmontese

\* Canning to Granville Nov. 8th, 1825. "We protested against armed intervention in some sort at Laybach." But there is a much stronger statement to A'Court (Oct. 31, 1826, Portugal F.O. 306) "Is it (a British Army) required in Portugal as an army of occupation. Such as Austria has sent into Naples and France into Spain? We protested against the principles of these occupations, both of which were (in their respective degrees) direct interferences in the internal concerns of the occupied countries, and we cannot imitate what we have in the face of the world condemned." The contrast of Canning's principles as understood by Castlereagh, and as executed by himself, is clear. Castlereagh admitted the Naples intervention as an exception, Canning held there were no exceptions.





GEORGE CANNING.

*From the Portrait by Sir Thomas Lawrence in National Portrait Gallery.*





and the triple tyrant," who had slaughtered the saints of God.

Besides Italy, the subjects discussed at Verona were four, the question of Spain, and the question of her revolted colonies, the slave trade, and the relations between Greece, Turkey and Russia. But the first of all—the question of Old Spain—became so infinitely the most important at Verona, that the others can be delayed till we consider Canning's policy towards Greece and the New World. Ferdinand the Seventh who had been restored to the throne of Spain by the sword of Wellington and the knives of his faithful Spaniards, was of all monarchs of that age the most bigoted and contemptible. Castlereagh described his character as "odious." It was a Spanish saying that "he had the heart of a tiger and the head of a mule." No one now thinks the weakness of Louis XVI and the vanity of his queen the sole causes of the French Revolution, or that the crimes of a monarch always produce the misfortunes of a nation, but few kings have been responsible for more cruelty and misgovernment than Ferdinand. After solemn vows to the constitution in 1814, he proceeded at once to abolish it, and to imprison the leaders of the Cortes or Parliament. The Inquisition was reintroduced and absolutism restored in all its fulness, Ferdinand being completely in the hands of his courtiers and confessors. Meanwhile trade was at a standstill and all the Spanish Colonies were in revolt. Having failed to induce the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle to aid him, Ferdinand began to amass troops to be despatched to America. A revolt broke out among the starved and ill-paid troops of the Army under Riego, which rapidly extended into the provinces. On March 9th, 1820, the terrified Ferdinand accepted the "constitution of 1812," which was extremely democratic and the product of visionary theorists. The proposal of Alexander to intervene was met by the English State paper of May 5th, 1820. Whilst the Holy Allies were occupied at Troppau and Laybach, with considering the Neapolitan revolt, Ferdinand called the Spanish democrats of 1812 or Exaltados from prison to office. They proposed measures for dissolving the monasteries and confiscating Clerical property, which at once brought on to Ferdinand's side all the reactionary and the bigoted, the peasants who were attached to the Church, and the moderates who hated extremes. But the Exaltados had the army on their side, and in addition all the different sectional interests and local patriotisms now awoke. Half the country was

soon in open or tacit rebellion, the Serviles or Ultraroyalists in the North, the Exaltados in the South. The French Government became alarmed at the near contagion of democratic principles. As a convenient outbreak of yellow fever threatened a more material infection, they used the excuse to mass forces on the frontier as a Cordon Sanitaire. This Cordon for the exclusion of disease was increased into an army of 100,000 men, in order to threaten the democrats of Spain and draw round them a sort of moral quarantine. Ferdinand, whose throne if not his life were now in danger, appealed for aid to Louis the Eighteenth.

Castlereagh's\* instructions on Spain were ;—solicitude for the safety of the royal family, observance of our (treaty) engagements with Portugal, and a rigid abstinence from any interference with the internal affairs of that country. It will be seen from this, and there are many other proofs, that the question of Spain or of armed intervention of the Allies was not contemplated as the main or even as an important subject of conference at Verona, and that Castlereagh had not realized the imminence of the danger,—another and a last instance of his lack of foresight. The main object of the Conference had been avowed as the Turkish question. But in passing through Paris Wellington saw Villele, the premier of France, and heard enough to convince him that France seriously thought of invading Spain, or pressing armed interference on the Congress. He at once wrote off for additional instructions, to which Canning replied on Sept. 27.† The answer is an interesting illustration of the diplomacy of Metternich's school, and of the insight of Canning. The Austrian and Prussian chargés d'affaires, armed with a document from the absent Russian chargé, presented themselves before Canning and protested against the appointment of ‡ A'Court. They requested that he might be stopped, because of the hopes that it would excite in the disaffected party and the colour which it would

\* April 25, 1820—to Sir H. Wellesley F. O. Spain 233—He instructs our ambassador to hint England expected 'such essential changes in the (Spanish system) as would give the monarchical principles of the Government its due force and dignity,' and to hope for 'a temperate government free in its principles, but exempt from those seeds of turbulence and agitation, which seem to be so deeply sunk in the constitution of 1812' Canning would never have written in so peremptory and critical a tone. *This was but a few days before the famous State paper of May 5th.*

† Verona F. O. Continent 46.

‡ Formerly British Ambassador at Naples, now despatched to Madrid.



give to the reports of dissension among the allies. "While these gentlemen were speaking, the French chargé was announced and immediately declared himself ready to support . . . his colleagues." This separate arrival was "studiously contrived," so as to impress Canning the more, as he soon discovered. This collective demand was a monstrous one, and worthy of the Holy allies, but Canning replied that A'Court had already gone and tried to calm their fears. "I thought it much better to treat the matter as lightly as possible," wrote he, but the lesson was not lost upon him. He drew the correct inference that this implied some joint project of interference in the affairs of Spain, and also from the conduct of the French envoy, that there would be some shade of difference between France and the Holy Alliance. He recommended Wellington to play on this feeling, and so avoid a joint declaration. "But if there should be a determined project of interference by force or by menace in the present struggle in Spain, so convinced are His Majesty's Government of the uselessness and danger of any such interference, so objectionable does it appear to them in principle, and so utterly impracticable in execution that, should the necessity arise, or (I would rather say) *if the opportunity should offer*, I am to instruct your Grace at once frankly and peremptorily to declare that to any such interference, come what may, His Majesty will never be a party." There was certainly no lack of boldness and vigour in these instructions, which threatened in diplomatic terms that England would rather dissolve the Alliance, formed in 1815 against Jacobinism in France, altogether than consent to interference in Spain.

The objects of the different Powers were these, Canning wished to dissolve the system of Government by Congress, to confine within due bounds "that predominating areopagitical spirit," in which the Holy Alliance took upon themselves the Government of the world. Alexander viewed Spain as the headquarters of Revolution and Jacobinism, and sought to win fame for himself by destroying the Spanish constitution with the aid of his Russian troops, whose attention he wished to distract. He argued on the analogy of Naples—if Austria suppressed revolution in Italy, why should not he in Spain? The one desire of France, who had counted for nothing at Troppau and Laybach, was to win renown by her actions at Verona. For that purpose she was prepared for intervention in Spain, but as will be seen her ideas on the form of that intervention varied at different times during the Conference.

Prussia was, as always at this time, the humble slave of Metternich who, though anxious for the repression of the pemocrats in Spain, was divided between his fears and his vanity. He was afraid that Alexander's project would increase Russian power and authority, and anxious that neither France nor the Czar should deprive Austria of the glory of directing and controlling the Holy Alliance.

Wellington used all his powers of persuasion to convince Alexander of the difficulty of the task he contemplated. He declared it to be incompatible with the principles England believed should be adopted by all countries, irrespective of their political systems. The case of Naples had been exceptional, bound up with questions of treaty obligations and the danger to Europe from the propagandist Carbonaris, but there was no likelihood that agitation would extend from Spain elsewhere. Metternich feared Alexander would take the opportunity of first conquering Spain and then uniting it in a strict alliance with Russia, and so would upset the balance of power. Louis XVIII and Villele were unwilling that Alexander should lead his army through French territory, but were anxious to secure his assistance in case of their own failure. The French envoy Montmorency therefore asked if the Powers would give France their moral and material support in case of war, and if they would join her in withdrawing their ambassadors. Wellington declared England could consider no conditional hypotheses of this type. Alexander, seeing the difficulties of his own project, declared he accepted the French plan to the full. Metternich now intervened with a proposal to specify the exact cases in which the Powers would interfere. The proposal was embodied in a *procès verbale*, specifying the cases which would produce joint interference;—first, an open attack by the Spanish Government on France; second, dethronement of the king, his trial or similar attempts on him and his family; last, a formal act attacking the legitimate succession of the royal family. Also the ambassadors were to present a formal demand for a change in the Constitution of 1812, to be made in notes presented to the Spanish Government. They were to demand their passports in case of refusal. Recollections of Castlereagh, as well as the well-known solicitude of England for the safety of the royal family of Spain, seem to have induced the Holy Alliance to hope for the concurrence of Wellington. Metternich had used every effort to win him over, and is even said, in the last



resort, to have attempted to overcome his resistance, by using diplomatists of the type Augustus of Poland once despatched to Charles the Twelfth of Sweden. But Wellington remained firm and, to the utter consternation of the Continental diplomatists, refused to sign not only the *procès verbale* of the 20th Oct. but that of November 17th. They seem to have been as startled as though Wellington had hurled a bomb-shell at their feet. He submitted his reasons in manly and energetic language\*—"Experience has shown that during revolutions the minds of men are influenced by motives of party and faction, and that which is most repugnant to their feelings *is the formal organized interference of foreign powers*, and that the effect is to weaken and endanger the party in whose favour it is exerted." He remonstrated with the Powers on account of the "highly objectionable" despatches, which they had agreed with France to address to Spain, and because of their proposed withdrawal of ambassadors. The British ambassador would have no part with them but would remain at Madrid, to endeavour to allay the irritation these hostile measures would cause, and to avoid the evil by friendly counsel and assistance. So ended the Congress of Verona.

What was the effect of Wellington's protest, and what was the outcome and importance of the Congress? Montmorency stated in his official note of the 26th December that the measures conceived and proposed at Verona "would have been completely successful, if England had thought herself at liberty to concur in them." It was indeed the first serious shock to the Holy Alliance, which had disregarded Castlereagh's protests, since they had found the English attitude of isolation no impediment to their suppressing the Neapolitan revolt. But the opposition of Wellington at Verona had been far more pronounced, vigorous and effectual than that of the English envoys at Troppau or Laybach. Alexander's projects were partly checked by him, though partly also by the unwillingness of Villele to give a passage to Russian troops through France. Wellington who, though a man of the firmest character, was frequently deceived in matters diplomatic, even imagined that he had prevented the separate action of France, as well as averted a joint intervention. This was not so, but none the less the differences between England and the Holy Alliance were not only revealed but

\* Verona—F.O. Continent, 49. Wellington to Canning, Nov. 19, 1822.

proclaimed to the world. The principles of the Patriarchs had received the most emphatic and open denial, and England was launched boldly upon her separate course. As Canning wrote to Frere\* Aug. 8, 1823: "The Allies lament themselves heavily at our separation from them; and cannot for their lives imagine that in disclaiming their principles we should have said what we really mean, and should thereafter continue pertinaciously to act as we have said. A little prudery, a little dust for the eyes of the House of Commons they could understand, and some prepared for it—but this real bonafide disapprobation astounds them; and this sturdy adherence to it when nobody is by—when we might just lift the mask, and show our real countenance to them without the world's seeing it—this is really carrying the jest too far—and they can tell us plainly that they wish we would have done, and "cease our fuming." The history of all I could tell them in two words—or rather in the substitution of one word for another—for "Alliance" read "England," and you have the clue of my policy."

The importance of Verona is therefore that it marked not, as was intended by Metternich, the beginning, but as was intended by Canning, the close of an epoch. This invests the Congress and its personages with an interest half-comic, half-pathetic. All the old world of diplomats and sovereigns was assembled there to hail, as they fondly dreamed, the auspicious birth of a union which would regenerate Europe. Pleasure was mingled with politics, and singers and comedians diverted "those other actors, the Kings." The Austrian Archduke and Duchess—the Viceroy and Vice-reine of Italy were there with a score of Italian princelings from the King of Sardinia to the Duke of Modena. Ferdinand of Naples—white-haired and stately, walked about the streets of Verona with a long-robed Capuchin on either side of him. Metternich, all smiles and bows, now displayed his irresistible address and charm in the ballroom and now in the cabinet; now he organized a reception, now he dissuaded an Italian duke from granting a constitution. He was ably supported by Esterhazy and Nesselrode, by Lieven and that greater diplomatist his wife. All the resources of beauty, as well as diplomacy, were employed to cajole or persuade the Duke of Wellington. The ex-empress Louise, now Duchess of Parma, chatted and played cards with the conqueror of her husband. Even

\* Festing—Frere, p. 257.



the fair Countess Lieven pleaded in vain, for the sturdy\* old soldier remained true to England and to Canning. But the central figure of the Congress, in both social and political aspects, was always Alexander. Tall, stately and the handsomest of men the Czar's presence and countenance were such as to attract every gaze. Sir Thomas Lawrence praised the nobility of his features, which his expression of dreamy melancholy enhanced. Sometimes he wandered about with Chateaubriand, and as he gazed on the bright sunlight of the city of Juliet, spoke to his companion of the glories of his own great city, where indeed it was always twilight, but where the gorgeous robes of the East and Syrian palms could be seen beneath a polar sky, and where the blue Neva flowed between quays of rose-granite bearing ten thousand ships on its bosom. Truly the Czar and the writer had exchanged parts, for it was Chateaubriand who was spell-bound by an eloquence and an imagination so strangely akin to his own. It was these fatal gifts which, applied to politics, had at one time made Alexander's fame rival that of Napoleon's, but had at length doomed all his hopes to failure, and turned generous aspirations into despotic realities. The dreamer, who had forced Louis XVIII to grant a constitution in France, was the tyrant who now desired to lead an army to overthrow one in Spain. The man who had placed peoples before sovereigns had become, after Metternich, the chief organizer of the despotic unions, which announced the divine right of Kings. The results of the Congress but confirmed his sense of gloom and failure. He dreaded the future which he foresaw would now open upon Europe. Indeed the Congress was the last muster and pageant of the forces of the old world, the last union which could be construed by any as the threat of the united governments against the united peoples of Europe. Never again would the smaller nations or the peoples crouch at the feet of a "moral union of despots." Never again would an Italian princeling feel secure on his throne or defer granting a constitution, because he *knew* that the Holy Alliance would overcome the demands of his people by force of arms. He might calculate on the prospect but could not foretell the result. Canning's attitude at this Congress in reality tolled the passing bell of the "new system for the government of Europe," of the Areopagus which presumed to

\* As Chateaubriand—Congrès de Vérone—has it—"on caressait en vain le successeur de Marlborough pour le faire sortir de le politique de son pays."

sit in judgment on the world. "No one remembers the speeches made round the table of Prince Metternich: but oh, immortal power of genius, no traveller will ever hear the lark sing in the fields of Verona without recalling Shakspeare!" Thus wrote Chateaubriand who, like nearly all contemporaries, saw only the immediate results. Because the Holy Alliance was foiled and flouted, almost dissolved, because joint interference was checked, and because the Congress was ineffectual, contemporaries decided to neglect and forget it. It is precisely for these reasons that posterity will remember it and Canning.

While the Congress had been proceeding, Canning had felt compelled to demand satisfaction from Spain for a long series of depredations on English shipping. We had conditionally postponed the recognition of the independence of her revolted colonies, on the understanding that Spain tacitly suffered our trade with them to continue, until she was in a position to effect new arrangements. The disorganization in Spain had withdrawn most of her ships from the seas. Innumerable pirates or privateers robbed or molested some English vessels, whilst in defiance of the agreement, the royal fleet seized others trading with the colonies, and condemned our ships to rot in Spanish harbours and our sailors to languish in Spanish prisons. On Oct. 28 Canning through A'Court threatened reprisals from the English fleet, unless "instant atonement" was made. "England would not look upon the anarchy in Spain as an offence; but neither would she allow Spain to plead it as a privilege." Canning felt both the honour and interests of his country demanded this action, but he is said to have considered the days, during which he awaited a reply, the most anxious of all his diplomatic career. It is characteristic that, though he knew the reply would be favourably influenced by the knowledge that England was fighting Spanish battles at Verona, and though he feared that reply might mean war, his high sense of honour did not permit him to disclose the course of negotiation or the attitude of England. Fortunately the Spanish Cortes behaved well, and freely admitted the necessity of reparation. The revelation of England's action at the end of the Congress gained their warmest applause, and they solicited the good offices of Canning. He therefore authorised Wellington to propose England as a mediator in the causes of dispute between Spain and France. A previous suggestion that England should mediate between the Con-



gress and Spain had been declined by Wellington, on the ground of objection to all *joint-intervention*. "The real though unavowed cause of French hostility," wrote Canning\* with true insight, "is perhaps the passion that is felt in France for something of *éclat* and national exertion; a sort of false appetite for Glory which they disguise to others and perhaps to themselves . . . to combat this prejudice may be more difficult than to strip it of its pretexts and point to the dangers with which it is accompanied." But mediation which finds one power so insensible to argument, as to compel resort to stripping tactics, is not likely to succeed. On Dec. 16 the British offer was declined. Montmorency, who had sought to give a European colour and support to a French invasion, was expelled. To the Foreign Office succeeded Chateaubriand, who had even at Verona endeavoured to make the Spanish question exclusively French, and who now breathed nothing but war. But the single object of England remained the preservation of peace, and for that Canning continued to labour. He had already succeeded in isolating France, and he now endeavoured to conciliate her. The Duke of Wellington, in his private capacity, had offered to try the effect of an appeal to Spain. Lord Fitzroy Somerset proceeded to Madrid with a memorandum, not from His Majesty's Plenipotentiary the Duke of Wellington, but from the "Duque de Ciudad Rodrigo," who advised the influential personages of Spain as their fellow *hidalgo* and countryman. But the united bundle of Allied despatches had been received at Madrid, and the proud spirit of the nation had been insulted. Moreover the Cortes rashly counted, despite emphatic disclaimers, on strong military support from the English nation in case of war. This last effort was rejected, and there remained only the power of employing good offices and giving friendly advice to both nations.

The real causes of the French agitation for war were two, the desire of the aristocrats to flesh their swords under the command of a Bourbon prince, to make the lilies as glorious as the tricolor, and the monarchy as stable as the empire; and the desire of the King and Villele to unite Ferdinand to Louis XVIII in a new *Pacte Famille*, by destroying the constitution both hated. Though the revolts and disturbances had largely subsided, the *Cordon Sanitaire*—now ominously named the Army of Observation—still remained.

\* To Wellington Dec. 8th, 1822. Continent F.O. 46.

Canning made every effort to conciliate and appease the French Hotspurs, both in public and private. As an individual he wrote to the Comte d'Artois to enlist his influence against the terrible calamity of war. He wrote private letters to his old friend and correspondent Chateaubriand—models of style and eloquence—in which he made a personal as well as a political appeal. The war was stripped of its pretexts as effectually as in the more public despatches, but the irritation of the statesman was calmed by appeals to the vanity of the writer. Nowhere are the French pleas and justifications so skilfully undraped. "I understand a war of conquest for the change or preservation of a dynasty. . . . but a war for the change of a political constitution, for the two chambers, for the extension of the royal prerogative, I really do not understand . . . You would not surely wish to propagate the Charta (of France) as Mahomet the Alkoran, or as in 1789 France propagated the Rights of Man." It is in these letters that Canning coins the phrase "Peace with honour" which he desired to give to France, and which Disraeli, surely not unconscious of its origin, declared he gave to England. Finally he ends with the solemn words "*le clef de l'avenir est encore entre vos mains, ouvrez-le ; et qui pourra repondre de l'étendue de la devastation ?*" Chateaubriand might well be intoxicated by the exquisite flattery, but the greatest French writer of his age was not all a brilliant impostor. His imaginative power gave him great ideas, even though he lacked the gifts of practical statesmanship. He felt his own fame and that of his country would be enhanced by the invasion of Spain. The glory of the minister was to enhance that of the writer, and the measures of the one were to realize the dreams of the other. Hence his sentiments and ambitions were bound up in a war, which would restore to a King an unshaken throne, and to the Church an unsullied altar.

Chateaubriand's influence was clearly seen in the French King's Speech to his Parliament. "Let Ferdinand be free to give to his people the institutions which they cannot hold except from him. From that moment hostilities shall cease." Legitimacy had again reared its crest. No sooner did the report reach England than universal indignation was excited at doctrines, which Canning afterwards publicly stigmatised as "abhorrent and monstrous." Not a day was lost before he

\* The series in *Congrès de Vérone* I. p. 445 et seq.



protested. "The King's speech,"\* wrote he to Sir Charles Stuart, "is construed as implying that the free institutions of the Spanish people can only be legitimately held from the spontaneous gift of the sovereign, first restored to absolute power, and then divesting himself of such portion of that power as he shall think proper. The Spanish nation could not be expected to subscribe to this proposition, nor could any British statesman uphold or defend it . . . it strikes at the roots of the British constitution." (Chateaubriand hastily and somewhat shabbily explained away the clear and obvious meaning of this speech). "The British government could not countenance a pretension on the part of France to make her example a rule for other nations: and still less could it admit a peculiar right in France to force that example specifically upon Spain, *in virtue of the consanguinity of the two reigning dynasties*." Here Canning touches on one of the real, though unavowed, objects of the war—to recover French influence and re-establish the Bourbon connection at Madrid. As War seemed only a question of days Canning wrote again and again to Stuart.† The despatch of February 18th displays the new spirit he had introduced into the cabinets of Europe. "Is it possible that the French government do not feel that the times are too big for such experiments? *that the days of mere court negotiations are gone by and are not yet returned?* that the principles which are at war in the world are principles, affecting not merely the external interests, but the internal safety of States? principles which cannot be brought into conflict in any quarter of Europe without endangering the safety of the whole? Above all do they not feel that France, with her newly restored dynasty and yet unsettled institutions, hazards more for her own safety, and in her safety more for that of the world than any minister ought upon his responsibility—political or moral—to venture without inevitable necessity?"

Canning was the more enraged at this evident war for ambition and aggrandizement, because he had forsaken his favourite doctrine of non-intervention, in the effort to avoid collision between France and Spain. He considered all interference in the internal affairs of States unjustifiable, but if it was a choice between that and war he would yield a point. As Spaniards

\* France F.O. 284. Feb. 3, 1823. The declaration of neutrality in case of war was withdrawn from the king's speech to the English parliament.

† To Sir Charles Stuart—France F.O. 284.

of all parties agreed some modifications of the Constitution of 1812 to be indispensably necessary, he suggested alterations in deference to the wishes of France as an alternative preferable to war. At the same time he utterly disclaimed any attempt at patronage or interference on the part of England. He did his best to soothe the pride of the Spanish Cortes who trusted rashly to English support, but who believed and rightly that the Royal rebellion in North Spain owed much to French instigation and French gold. This last effort failed, and the French—"driven on by the Ultrageous party—their pokers and goaders"—at length declared open war by crossing the frontier on the 6th of April, 1823. The spirit of St. Louis hovered over the French army, said Chateaubriand, the Pope had blessed their arms, the gonfalon of the Church was their banner. But the veterans of the Republic must have looked with contempt on the young nobles in their gorgeous uniforms and on their untried leader, the Duc d'Angouleme. They remembered with idle regret the days when St. Just in drab civilian garb cheered his ragged soldiers to victory at Weissenburg, and when the "little corporal," in his plain grey coat with the two-sous cockade in his hat, led them to the triumphs of Lodi and Austerlitz. Were these men likely to conquer Spain when Napoleon had failed? To the tricolor had now succeeded the lilies, to the Marseillaise the chants and hymns of priests. But had they known it the crucifix was to avail more than the sword. The Spanish peasants welcomed this priestly army which was to deliver them from the anti-clerical Cortes, and restore to them the rule of the Church. The invasion was but a military parade. The Cortes, which had uttered the most insolent threats and boasts, could organize no effectual resistance. They retired to Cadiz, dragging the King with them into captivity. Sir Robert Wilson, who had again drawn his adventurous sword for the cause of liberty, came with Lord Nugent to organize risings which should raise the siege of Cadiz. But Mina, the only capable general among the Spaniards, could not drill or discipline his forces, and the army, which had done so much to cause, did little to defend the revolution. Angouleme refused to treat until Ferdinand was released from captivity. The fort of the Trocadero was stormed and the city of Cadiz bombarded. The Exaltados now decided to throw themselves on the mercy of the King, whom they had previously deposed, declared insane and unfit to rule. On September 30th he signed with apparent goodwill a general amnesty, and was conveyed to the French camp the



next day on the express understanding that the Cortes surrendered to him and not to Angouleme. He at once began a new course of bigotry and reaction, repealed the amnesty and invalidated every act of the Cortes since 1820. He made his confessor secretary of state, and announced his intention of "offering to God holocausts of piety." Riego and other Liberals were hung or shot, and thousands of men and women imprisoned. The excesses of the Neapolitan reaction were surpassed both in kind and degree. So savage were the reprisals that not only did Angouleme use all his influence to check them, but the Ambassadors of the three Allies even made vigorous remonstrances against this bloody re-establishment of absolutism.

Canning had been unwilling to behold this shameless French act of aggression, or to see the Pacte Famille renewed, and for a time he seriously meditated war. That policy of braggadocio and swashbuckling, so common at many periods of European history besides our own, was never that of Canning. "A notion is entertained by some," wrote he to\* A'Court, "that the mere menace of war from England would make France abandon her purpose. *But a menace, which is not intended to be executed, is an engine which Great Britain should never condescend to employ!*" Canning never threatened idly or in vain, and he made it clear that, if Portugal was attacked by France, treaty obligations bound us to defend her. Also a continued or permanent occupation of Spanish soil by the French forces would produce war. But war, in defence of the doctrine of non-intervention, would have brought all the Holy Alliance into the field against us, and England had not yet recovered from the effects of the Napoleonic struggle. Wellington pointed out the military dangers, and Canning himself saw that the result might be to light a flame which would overspread Europe.† "I do not deny that I had an itch for war with France," wrote Canning to Frere, "and that a little provocation—but I look back on the decision with entire and perfect self congratulation." England remained at peace, jealous and vigilant to avenge any attack on her interests and her honour, but unwilling to defend the country of Cervantes in deference to the principles of Don Quixote.

\* February 9, 1823—Spain F.O. 268.

† Festing, Frere—p. 257; also Well. Desp. N.S.V. 34-50 et passim. Stapleton, Pol. Life, I. 322-3.

But Canning was firmly resolved that, if we did not engage in war, we would indulge no petty resentments by petty violations of international law, or secret encouragements to Spain. The neutrality he decided to maintain should be entire and absolute, even though he anticipated that Spain could offer no effectual resistance. After the overthrow of the Cortes and re-establishment of Absolutism, Canning held England aloof from the odious intrigues and cruelties of the Spanish Court, by way of marking disapproval.\* "The time may come when His Catholic Majesty himself, grown weary of the agitations and the animosities, with which he is surrounded, and of the perpetual transfer of the offices of state from one incompetent minister to another, may select some individual worthy of his confidence and capable of giving stability to his counsels. With an administration so formed it will be the duty of the British Minister to cultivate the most intimate and confidential relations, and to employ the influence of his Government for the only purposes to which it can be properly applied, the recommendation of a moderate and healing policy, and of such measures as may conduce to the tranquillity and happiness of Spain. But while the present uncertainty and fluctuations of counsel prevail, you cannot too studiously avoid the appearance of advising or controlling, or of being the setter up or puller down of successive ministers."

One of the most popular theories advanced by the extremer Whigs was that the English ought to guarantee a constitution to Spain. Nothing enraged them so much as the fact that A'Court had left the King, when in manifest duress at Cadiz and proceeded to Gibraltar, only rejoining Him when he was set at liberty. But as A'Court was accredited to Ferdinand, and not to a provisional Government, to him alone could he pay his respects. On the larger question of guarantee Canning wrote to † A'Court in no uncertain sense. "Objectionable as a territorial guaranty is shown to be, the objections to a guaranty of internal institutions are infinitely stronger. It is difficult to say whether these objections apply with greater force to the party giving or to that which receives such a guaranty. The very principle, on which the British Government so earnestly deprecated the war against Spain, was that of the right of any Nation to change or modify its internal institutions. Is that war to end in His Majesty's

\* Dec. 29, 1823, to A'Court, Spain F.O. 298.

† Spain F.O. Sept. 18th, 1823. Stapleton Pol. Life I. 428 et seq.



consenting to assume to himself the province of defending against all challengers, from within as well as from without, the institutions whatever they may be, which the war may leave standing in Spain? Is His Majesty to guarantee the constitution of 1812, indifference to which to say the least, if not aversion, is the single point upon which anything like an agreement of opinion has been found to exist in Spain? Or is he to guarantee the ancient despotism, the restoration of which with all its accompaniments appears to be the object of by far the largest party in the country? Or is it to be on behalf of some new system, to be struck out at a heat at the winding up of affairs at Cadiz, that the faith of Great Britain is to be pledged—and that her blood and treasure are to be forthcoming? Or is it only to be the undoubted right of the Spanish nation to reform its own Government that His Majesty's guaranty has to be added? If such a guaranty were anything more than the mere affirmation of an abstract principle against whom would it have practically to operate? Clearly against the Spaniards themselves and in the endless struggle, which may be expected from the distracted state of the country, against every party by turns? Could anything be more unbecoming than the assumption of such a right by a foreign power? Could anything be more intolerable to the country in respect to which it was assumed?" He goes on to say that England would not acknowledge such a right in any other Power. "The exercise of such a right must necessarily lead to our intermeddling with the affairs of the guaranteed State, such as to place it in fact at the mercy of the Power who gives the guarantee. Russia in former times guaranteed the constitution of Poland, the result is known and it was inevitable."

Canning's instance of Russia as the guarantor of constitutions, and the result and effect is admirable. Moreover he saw that Spain, distracted by violent passions and parties, was as yet unfit for constitutional government. During the next forty years the only men, who gave any peace to the country or acquired any ascendancy, were men like Narvaez or O'Donnell, who never hesitated to shoot their political opponents in preference to arguing with them. Again Spain was neither united nor was she a nation. She was a collection of jealous and self-centred provincials, Castilians, Andalusians, Asturians, Catalonians, Basques. The Spaniards never united amongst themselves except against the meddling of a foreign power as Napoleon discovered to his ruin. That they did not always unite even then Angoulême proved. The lot of the

hapless guaranteeing Power would have been exactly as Canning forecast. A Castilian would rather have been the subject of a Catalan, an Exaltado would sooner have been absolved by a priest, than any or either would have submitted to the pedantic intervention of foreigners, or listened to abstract dissertations on constitutional Liberty from the Ministers of England. Just as no one can work an electric battery unless fresh stores of accumulated energy are continually provided, so the vital force of a constitution is drawn from the collective strength and intelligence of a nation. Canning's contemporaries thought a nation possessing a good constitution was thereby regenerated, not seeing that a constitution must be adapted to the needs and the character of a nation, and that a good constitution may accompany but cannot of itself create the national greatness or prosperity. Spain endowed with our constitution at this time would have been like David in Saul's coat-of-mail, hampered and fettered and weighed down by a cumbrous protective armour not its own.

Canning defended himself with inimitable skill from the Liberal attack in Parliament. His speech of April 28, 1823, was a marvel of clearness, and one of his finest if not one of his most eloquent efforts. It was the more remarkable because Brougham's reply was to the last degree weak and ineffective. To that extra-parliamentary audience—the public at large—he defended himself in a \* speech at Plymouth containing one of the most beautiful passages in the whole range of English oratory. "Let it not be said that we cultivate peace either because we fear, or because we are unprepared for war. . . . The resources created by peace are means of war. In cherishing these resources we but accumulate those means. Our present repose is no more a proof of inability to act, than the state of inertness and inactivity in which I have seen these mighty masses that float in the water above your town, is a proof they are devoid of strength and not fitted out for action. You well know how one of those stupendous masses, now reposing on their shadows in perfect stillness—how soon upon any call of patriotism or of necessity, it would assume the likeness of an animated thing, instinct with life—how soon it would ruffle, as it were, its swelling plumage—how quickly it would put forth its beauty and bravery, collect its scattered elements and awaken its dormant thunder. Such as is one of these mighty machines when springing from

\* October, 1823.



inaction into a display of its might—such is England herself, while apparently passive and motionless, she silently concentrates the power to be put forth on an adequate occasion. But God forbid that that occasion should arise.” This was no idle boasting, that Canning was prepared to run the risk of war on questions of deep and vital import he quickly showed. Meanwhile this bold declaration struck terror into the hearts of the Holy Alliance. They had often discussed and shuddered over the mischievous utterances of the Opposition leaders, like Tierney and Brougham. What then must have been their feelings to hear these words from a responsible minister of England?

If contemporaries had been asked to point out Canning's failures as a foreign minister, they would almost certainly have selected his action in 1823. They would have criticized his failure to prevent war, and would probably have declared that he should either have fought or given a constitutional guarantee. His attempts to prevent war had been strenuous, but largely ineffectual because France feared and distrusted England. Castlereagh's somewhat dubious and *apparently* insincere attitude since 1820 had left behind it a legacy of hatred and suspicion. Canning declared on visiting Paris in 1826 that had the French Cabinet understood and believed England in 1823, as they did three years afterwards, there would have been no war. This is \*possible but not altogether certain, as France was influenced by motives of ambition and interest as well as distrust. As to whether Canning should have resisted France with arms or given a guarantee time has passed its judgment. The appeal to the Court of Posterity is the hardest test to which any statesman or policy can be submitted. Its verdict in both these cases is that the risks were too great, the gains to France and to liberty too small and problematical to admit of our interference. Moreover, in accordance with his system, Canning had limited and narrowed the sphere of action. His firmness averted the aggression of Portugal, and at the same time protected her from attack. He maintained absolute neutrality, showed a friendly feeling to Spain, and restrained the further aggression of France. The means by which he destroyed all the gain in renown and in material advantage, which France acquired by her occupation of Spain, are to be sought in another chapter and another continent.

\* This view was strongly held by Sir Robert Wilson—a very high authority. Ad. MSS. 30,132 ff. 66-7,71.

## CHAPTER X

### CANNING AND THE NEW WORLD

"No wise man has a policy," said the Viceroy, "a policy is the blackmail levied by the Fool on the Unforeseen." There are in fact two sorts of policy. The first is propounded by theorists or emotional agitators and consists of a pedantic insistence upon abstract principles, which men like the Viceroy find it impossible to adjust to local conditions. The second is propounded only by great statesmen, who lay down principles sufficiently wide to provide for the unforeseen, and yet sufficiently based on history and on facts to produce—in the main—anticipated results. In no department of state-affairs is it so needful that there should be a system as in foreign policy. "We must deal with the affairs of men," said Canning on Feb. 24th, 1826, "on abstract principles, modified of course according to time and circumstances. We must soar to the heights from which alone extended views of human nature can be taken." Canning's system of policy was founded on an observation of the conditions before him, it embraced both the Old and New World, providing for the most sudden and unexpected occurrences, and yet producing much that he had foreseen and desired. This policy has already been shown on a small scale in the negotiations at Verona and with Spain, where the microscope can discern some of the future tendencies and developments. The first and primary object was the peace of the world, and the formula to produce this result was *non-intervention*, or "every nation for itself and God for us all!" From this doctrine flowed all Canning's policy, for England was to champion this principle. This enabled her to hold the balance between absolutism and liberty, as she had shown in Spain by an absolute neutrality, which she endeavoured to force on other nations beside herself. Thus by promoting peace, goodwill



and national independence she won over popular governments, she ranged the peoples on her side against their absolutist governments, she enlisted the smaller nations struggling for their rights in Europe and the nations struggling to birth in America, against the Holy Alliance. Canning meant to make England the arbiter of the world, but it was by peaceful means and for no greedy and selfish objects of aggrandizement. He was resolved to secure commercial rights for England, so that she should not be penalised, but he never claimed an exclusive or exceptional treatment. He was resolved that the sword of England should leap from its scabbard to avenge any serious outrage upon the principles he had laid down. But in spite of many opportunities and obvious temptations he was never seduced from this policy by mere sordid desire for acquisition of territory or seizure of special political advantages. It was in this large and grand sense that "England" was to be substituted for the "Alliance." She was to communicate by her example and her policy something of prosperity and stability to surrounding nations. England herself was to legislate for the world, but she demanded only for this service its respect and admiration. She did not, like other legislators, seek material rewards from each party whom she served.

The vast and splendid empire, which the swords of Cortez and Pizarro had given to Spain, remained for three hundred years cut off from all intercourse with any other nation. The Conquistadors had equalled the heroes of romance in bravery and in exploits, but they were unskilled in the most difficult of all arts, that of government. The natives were treated with a cruelty which even rhetoric cannot exaggerate, the remains of ancient and often noble civilisations were crushed out. The Church and the Inquisition were imposed on the New World, as well as an economic and commercial policy of the narrowest and most ruinous type. The "Council of the Indies" at Madrid tried indeed to protect the natives, but remained comparatively indifferent to the needs or the sufferings of its colonies, it desired only gold and thought bullion synonymous with wealth. Adventurers like Drake and Raleigh sacked a town or captured a plate fleet and destroyed Spanish naval supremacy. But the Spanish colonies remained, with immense but undeveloped resources and infinite possibilities, enclosed as within a convent wall. The dazzling genius of Chatham, first among English statesmen conceived the idea of bursting these barriers and giving half a continent to the British Crown. A palace intrigue hurled

the great minister from office, and thus cut short a design which might have written a new volume in the History of the World. The younger Pitt had endeavoured to strip Spain of her colonies, in revenge for her steadfast alliance with France from 1796-1803. But when Bonaparte invaded Spain Canning had indignantly rejected a proposal that England should compensate herself for her losses, by occupying the colonies of Spain who was now her ally. The Colonies remained pathetically loyal, refused to acknowledge Joseph Bonaparte, and erected local Juntas—provisional governments, which endeavoured to be submissive to the Central Junta in Spain. But they had tasted the sweets of independence, and their harsh and oppressive treatment by the mother country at length alienated and dissolved a loyalty, which had always been a paradox and an enigma to other nations. By 1813 Venezuela, Mexico, New Granada, and Buenos Ayres had declared for independence. The incredible cruelties, with which the Spaniards endeavoured to suppress the revolts, produced terrible reprisals and promoted independence. The great leader of the insurgents was that strange character—half hero half charlatan—the man acclaimed as a second and greater Washington, Bolivar the “Liberator.” Peru, Columbia, Venezuela and Bolivia all owe to him their freedom from Spain. No man was better qualified to lead or to unite the nondescript armies he commanded. San Martin was a more disinterested statesman, Paez possibly had a sterner courage, Sucre was perhaps a better general. But no man united such daring to such resolution, so clear a conception of the military and political situation to such a fiery and passionate eloquence. Often defeated he was always greatest in retreat and most victorious after the most signal disasters. His passage of the Andes in 1824 with his motley forces is a feat worthy of comparison with Napoleon and Hannibal’s feat in crossing the Alps. But turning from his military triumphs it must be admitted that his civil administration was grossly corrupt, his conduct unstable and treacherous, often the basest and most selfish opportunism. His ideal of government appeared to be a system of recurring coup d’etats, which rendered him permanent Dictator of the States he professed to liberate. It may be urged in his justification that as the Spaniards had known nothing of the art of government they could not have imparted it to the colonists, that the rule of the sword was preferable to the rule of the knife, and the order of the camp preferable to the anarchy of



the market place. And though immeasurably ambitious and tyrannical, Bolivar was not without great ideas of policy to which he clung with strenuous persistence.

English sympathy had gone out to South America in public subscriptions and in voluntary aid. Cochrane, who as a sailor was hardly inferior even to Nelson, showed his matchless skill and daring in the Chilian Navy. Many English soldiers served as volunteers, and the "English Legion" was the veritable "Old Guard" of Bolivar's motley forces. But the merchants of England were in reality more effectual as Liberators than the Legionaries, the subscribers, or even than Bolivar himself. The old exclusive restrictions of colonial commerce to Spain were completely broken down, and England poured its goods upon South America and infinitely developed her resources. A tacit compact was arranged between Spain and England that the one should enforce no commercial restrictions while the other continued to refuse political recognition. It was further held that, if Spain did succeed in reasserting her authority, she should give full notice before resuming an exclusive trade policy. The question of armed intervention from Europe had been strongly urged by Alexander, and mildly deprecated by Castlereagh at Aix-la-Chapelle. The latter had conciliated Spain by a stringent foreign enlistment Act. England had constantly offered her mediation and good offices between Spain and her colonies, and both were as constantly refused. During the last years of Castlereagh Russian and French intrigues continued in South America, and English trade increased in volume. Castlereagh's last opinions were contained in the instructions for Verona. He declared that no recognition could be contemplated in territories within which the contest still continued, but stated that if Spain did not re-establish her authority other States would soon acknowledge them. "The whole," he concluded, "may be regarded as a question of *time* rather than *principle*."

Such was the condition when Canning received the seals. On the question of recognition, he wrote to\* Wellington, Sept. 27, 1822, that he must under no circumstances, pledge his Government against recognition, and instructed him to hint that England might be compelled to recognize the colonies before Parliament met. The prompt measures by which he enforced from Spain redress for her interference

\* F.O. Continent, 46.

with English ships trading with the colonies however delayed the need for recognition. On Nov. 8, he wrote to the Duke, "in the present state of the world, of the peninsula, of the country the *American questions are out of all proportion more important than the European, and if we do not seize and turn them to our advantage in time we shall rue the loss of an opportunity never never to be recovered.*" The designs of France on the New World proved the truth of these words. By April, 1823, France was invading Spain and apparently desirous of reviving the *Pacte Famille*. Chateaubriand was both able and ambitious, and bent upon aggrandisement.\* He and Villele had at first thought of a French expedition to subdue the revolted colonies, instead of an invasion of old Spain. Villele had declared France would not submit to extension of British advantages or territory in South America. Canning, ever jealous of his country's honour, had sent a haughty reply, whilst he wrote privately to Wellington: "I confess I long to tell Villele (if it were worth while and if this were the moment) that we *will* trade with the *late* Spanish American Colonies, whether France likes it or not, that we will not respect the Spanish guarda-costas, which attempt to interdict that trade to us, and that if France sends a large fleet to help the guarda-costas, we will send a larger to watch at least their operations." The danger was indeed a very real one and justified these vigorous words. Chateaubriand secretly designed to reconquer the colonies and place them under a Bourbon prince or princes, and thus exalt the prestige of France. Alexander, the great advocate of Legitimacy, who had encouraged France in her designs on Spain, had openly avowed his wish to use armed intervention against her revolted colonies. He had also recently published an Ukase prohibiting foreign vessels from trading within one hundred Italian miles of the North-west coast of America, from Behring's Strait to the 51st latitude. He coolly ignored the fact that there were actual trade settlements under the English flag within his political Tom Tiddler's ground. Canning at once protested and eventually forced a withdrawal of these pretensions. But the Ukase is valuable evidence of Alexander's designs. It was another indication to Canning that he might have to fear war both with France and Russia, if he asserted the principle of non-intervention in the New World. Early in 1823 Canning demanded and obtained from France a dis-

\* Well. Desp. I. 637-650. Stapleton, Pol. Life I. 221.



claimer of any views of ambition or aggrandizement. But this he knew was a mere diplomatic evasion.\* On March 31st he wrote to Sir Charles Stuart: "With respect to the (revolted) Colonies time and *the course of events* appear to have already substantially decided their separation from the mother country, although their formal recognition as independent States by His Majesty may be hastened or retarded by various external circumstances, as well as by the more or less satisfactory progress in each State towards a regular and settled form of government." He ended by disclaiming in the most solemn manner any intention on the part of England to appropriate the smallest portion of the late Spanish possessions in America. Unfriendly critics have denounced Canning as opportunistic, and Stapleton, who hardly grasped the wider aspects of his policy, somewhat favours this view. But his policy was only the opportunism of defence. The aggressive interference of any Power he would endeavour to prevent by every means at his command. If foiled he might endeavour to balance it by compensating advantages to England, but under no circumstances should English policy begin with aggression or end with annexation. This is surely opportunism in a very unusual and a very noble sense. Canning hesitated long about going to war with France for violating the principle of non-intervention, but he immediately rejected with scorn the bribe of Montevideo offered by Spain as the price of our alliance, and disdained equally some French intrigues which hinted at joint partition of the Spanish colonies. If it is opportunism to seek first the peace of the world, to make your country the arbiter of differences and the reconciler of nations, to disclaim territorial aggrandizement, to uphold the inalienable rights of nations and to strengthen and elevate the national independence of individual States, Canning was an opportunist. But such a policy is far removed from the selfish and sordid nationalism, the exclusive and unjust desires to secure individual advantages at the expense of other nations and of justice, which pass as the current definitions or examples of opportunism.

The first object of Canning was to secure the safety of British trade with the colonies. He demanded no exclusive or preferential treatment, but insisted upon security being given to Englishmen in their commercial pursuits. Spain

\* France, F.O. 284.

† Spain, F.O. 268. Feb. 9th, 1823, to A'Court.

desired to re-establish the Council of the Indies in all its tyranny and power. Villele and Chateaubriand were clearly occupying old Spain as a means by which to menace England and enforce concessions to French rule or influence in the New World. Alexander wished to enforce the principles of Legitimacy upon a new continent by the use of the military forces of the Holy Alliance. To Villele and Alexander Canning was determined to offer armed resistance. He looked around him for allies and saw only the United States. The policy of England towards the United States had been much changed by the miserable war of 1812-4, which Canning, had he been in office, might have avoided altogether by the "honourable conciliation" he had advocated. Castlereagh had shown himself eager to avoid causes of quarrel, but his American policy resembled his European; \* "wavering and unsteady" "willing to wound and yet afraid to strike," such was the estimate of Adams the American foreign Secretary. Castlereagh himself admitted that he was suspected by the Holy Alliance of endeavouring to excite Spanish Liberalism, and by the United States of endeavouring to crush it. Canning had already done something to change all this, had shown a conciliatory disposition and produced something like harmony between the two governments. Until now the United States had, in deference to the warnings of Washington, absolutely isolated and separated themselves from European affairs. They had, however, already acquired Louisiana from France and Florida from Spain. They had shown sympathy with the South American patriots, and in 1822 had recognised Colombia, Buenos Ayres, Mexico, Chili and Peru as sovereign independent States. They had further engaged in designs of their own upon Cuba, which had been a source of great anxiety to † Canning and which he was resolved to prevent. At present both English-speaking governments were threatened by a common danger, the attack of Legitimacy upon the New World.

\* Reddaway—Monroe Doctrine—p. 14. Also Spain, F.O. 233. Castlereagh to Sir H. Wellesley 25 Ap. 1820. There is an extraordinary incident connected with St. Domingo. In negotiating with France on this subject Canning found England was bound not to interfere by a secret article in a treaty signed by Castlereagh. Yet of this article Wellington, Castlereagh's bosom friend and colleague, was ignorant! Stapleton Correspec. I 278 et seq. Incidentally all this confirms and strengthens, by analogy, our view of Castlereagh's European policy.

† Reddaway p. 55—Well. Desp. N.S. I. 117, etc. etc.



A full political recognition of the Spanish Colonies Canning was at present unable to offer, because of opposition in the Cabinet, because it would offend Spain and perhaps violate our neutrality, and because their stability was as yet uncertain. Lastly, it would offend all the Allies without greatly benefiting Great Britain. But on commercial recognition he was prepared to insist, and had been urged thereto by countless petitions from English manufacturers, shipowners, and Chambers of Commerce. At the end of 1822 he had announced his intentions and obtained the opinion of the Board of Trade, The Treasury, and the Crown Lawyers. The French progress in Spain now urged him to act. On the 16th Aug. 1823, he opened the subject to Rush, the United States ambassador in London, and suggested a joint adjustment of policy on South American affairs. On the 20th he sent the following note, which may fairly be described as one of the most important documents of the era. (1) The English Government conceived the recovery of the Colonies by Spain to be hopeless. (2) It viewed their recognition as one of time and circumstance. (3) It was not disposed to impede an arrangement between them and the Mother country by amicable negotiations. (4) It aimed not at the possession of any portion of them for Great Britain. (5) It could not see any part of them transferred to any other Power without indifference. If these were the opinions of the United States, "why should they not be mutually confided to each other and declared in the face of the world? This would be at once the most effectual and the least offensive mode of intimating the joint disapprobation of Great Britain and the United States of any projects which might be cherished by any European Power, of a forcible enterprise for reducing the Colonies to subjugation on the behalf, or in the name of Spain; or of the acquisition of any part of them to itself by cession or by conquest." Canning greatly impressed Rush with his earnestness, but the American was hampered by his lack of specific instructions, and a desire not to be drawn into European politics. After many interviews, as time pressed, Canning was obliged to abandon the hope of a joint public declaration. But he had secured a promise at any rate of moral and perhaps of material support which was of the greatest value to him. His statepaper and subsequent conversations had laid down for the first time the doctrine of non-intervention, as applied to the New World, had enlightened the minds of American statesmen, and prepared the way for the famous "Monroe doctrine."

Thus strengthened Canning determined to deal boldly and decisively with the designs of France—and to inform her plainly that any attack on Spanish America would at once produce war with Great Britain. He was at length resolved to draw the sword for the doctrine of non-intervention against France or Russia or both combined. On Oct. 9th, 1823, and previous days he held several conferences with the French ambassador Polignac—a somewhat unscrupulous negotiator—‘quo non jesuitior alter’ as Canning wrote him down. The memorandum of the conferences was afterwards published and aroused extraordinary interest and enthusiasm. “Britain,” said the President of Mexico, “has interposed her trident to save the New World from the Holy Alliance.” \* So indeed it was, Polignac faced with the dreadful alternative of war, disclaimed any desire on the part of France to appropriate any part of the Spanish colonies, or to act against them by force of arms. He admitted a return to the old relations of the colonies to Spain to be utterly hopeless, but strongly urged England to take part in a joint conference on the subject. Canning urged the considerations already given in his note to Rush. In addition he declared England’s intentions of accrediting consuls to the several provinces of Spanish America, in order to give to her trade that character of permanence and security needed for commercial enterprises. As for the question of a Congress, which he hated on principle, Canning took up the attitude he always assumed in such a case. He asserted the opinions and peculiar claims of England and declared that she would go into no joint declaration with Powers, whose opinions were less formed than her own. It was in short his intention so to accumulate conditions, which he publicly declared, and so to insist upon distinctions, that England either took no part in the Congress, or entered into it upon terms which caused the other members merely to be witnesses and registers of her will. His action was effective and though the Holy Alliance repeated its overtures, the Congress never met. Moreover the appointment of British consuls to the chief towns of the Spanish colonies had an immense effect. It lent a great moral force to their existence as States, it assured to them an enormous material assistance

\* How real and urgent was the danger may be gathered from Sir Robert Wilson—Ad. MSS. 30, 132. f. 98-100, Nov. 20-3 1823. “The French are fortifying Cadiz and an armament in Spanish vessels is fitting out for the West Indies—unless the British Government protects South America or repeals the Foreign Enlistment Bill the western hemisphere will again be peopled with slaves?”



in the development of their trade with Great Britain. The United States had recognized their political existence, but her trade and her influence were far less than those of Britain. Canning had also despatched a commission to examine the stability of the Spanish American governments, and was now awaiting their report to decide upon political recognition. From henceforward the danger of armed interference was far less. Canning had forced France to renounce it, the Holy Alliance could only act through Russia, and Canning justly held that Russia could not act alone. Thus he had stood before the world as the champion of non-interference against Legitimacy, of Liberty against despotism.

The Polignac Memorandum was not published till March, 1824, and meanwhile the United States had accomplished a memorable stroke of policy. Adams, the Secretary, was far more than Monroe the directing force of their policy, and is in fact the greatest foreign minister America has produced. Shrewd, cautious, and endowed with an indomitable will he was a worthy rival to Canning. The overtures with Rush had failed to produce a joint declaration, partly because some of the legacy of selfishness and suspicion bequeathed by Castlereagh remained. Canning himself was not altogether trusted by Adams, who declared that his proposals would have made America a "little cockboat following in the wake of the English man-of-war." A joint declaration of their intentions was in Canning's favour and carried out his policy. It would support the cause of constitutional monarchy, and hold the balance between despotism and liberty. At the same time that Adams feared France and wished to support England against the Holy Alliance, he would not contribute to her prestige or special interests. In the middle of September, 1823, Canning had again approached Rush and endeavoured to meet his objections by these words \* "If the policy was new . . . so also was the problem and full as much American as European, to say no more . . . The United States . . . were the first power established on that continent, and now confessedly the leading power . . . Could Europe expect this difference?"

This was a most valuable lesson to the United States as to her obligations and policy, and is the † last direct influence

\* Reddaway-p. 50-1.

† It appears that the Memorandum of the conference with Polignac was not shown to Rush, in time for him to communicate it to Adams before the Presidential message of Dec. 2nd, 1823. Reddaway, pp. 53, et seq.

exercised by Canning on American policy in 1823. In a sense he was the author of the Monroe doctrine, in that he laid down broad principles and made valuable suggestions, but these were interpreted or rather twisted by Adams to a use which he neither desired nor approved. The problem of Adams was to make a declaration of policy, which should keep the States clear of European entanglements while it supported England in her resistance to French designs, which should assert independence of England and vindicate the principles of democracy as opposed to constitutionalism. The solution was the famous presidential message of Dec. 2nd 1823, which contained the "Monroe" or more appropriately the "Adams" doctrine.

The Monroe doctrine, as understood by Adams, contained two principles in addition to a large amount of vague rhetoric on the blessings of republicanism and liberty. These were non-intervention of European powers in America, and the recognition of the United States as the leading power in the great Western Continent. The first doctrine in its extreme form, prompted by the Ukase of the Czar, was stated as follows:—"The American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed, and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers." In the second case, admitting the right of Spain to continue the war, it is our policy to consider the government *de facto* as the legitimate government for us, "it is impossible that the allied powers should extend their political system to any portion of either continent, without endangering our peace and happiness . . . It is equally impossible therefore that we should behold such interposition *in any form*, with indifference." In this last principle the extraordinary skill of Adams is seen, for he induced Southern America to look to the United States for protection and encouragement yet did not absolutely promise assistance. He claimed the laurel without risking bloodshed. By the extension of the "political system of the Allies" he meant that the United States were tolerant of monarchy in America, but were opposed to European attempts to establish it by *force* or *intrigue*. Also though Adams asserted the United States to be the leading Power in America he professed absolute neutrality towards other American states. This second part of the message Canning qualified slightly by explaining to Chateaubriand that, if it was interpreted as condemning the interference of Spain herself with



Spanish America, it would constitute as "important a difference between their view of the subject and ours as it is impossible to conceive." The first part of the message—the condemnation of all future colonization of America by European Powers—was peculiarly offensive to Canning. It was a clever local adaptation of his own principle of non-intervention. As he meant it to be universal any such adaptation he was unequivocally prepared to combat. Great Britain, he told Rush, "could not acknowledge the right of any Power to proclaim such a principle much less to bind other countries to the observance of it. If we were to be repelled from America it would not matter whether that repulsion were effected by the Ukase of Russia excluding us from the sea; or by the new doctrine of the President excluding us from the land. But we cannot yield obedience to either." These pretensions were in fact practically disavowed, or at least largely qualified through Canning's influence. For the subsequent development of the Monroe doctrine neither Canning nor Adams can be held as specially responsible. Adams certainly never had the slightest idea of proclaiming that the United States held a sort of protectorate over other American States. The United States increasing in power, wealth and arrogance have used the words of the Monroe doctrine just as we have used Magna Carta, diverting or expanding the meaning to suit later requirements and new claims. All that can be said is that Adams asserted somewhat boldly the leading position of the United States in the American continent, and by certain rash and certain mystic and obscure phrases gave a very partial justification to the pretensions of later times. Adams' assertion of the principles of neutrality and non-intervention for his own country in its dealing with other American States indeed expressly disclaimed such ideas. Though Adams did something to make possible a Pan-American ideal, it is probable that had he never lived President Cleveland or Roosevelt would have found almost as much justification in other utterances by former American statesmen. The extravagant pretensions now advanced and claimed as part of the "Monroe Doctrine," though perhaps representative of the true power and position of the United States in 1895 or 1901, were not those which Canning could possibly have acknowledged or Adams possibly have proclaimed in 1823.

The presidential message was received by the world with

something of astonishment. That the United States were the leading power in America had been admitted, nay suggested by Canning, but France and the Holy Alliance were rudely awakened. The ingenious passage, which France and the Holy Alliance took to imply opposition to their attack, and the South Americans to imply assistance, produced great effect. The Czar and his Ukase were dissolved into space, and though Chateaubriand laughed at the Yankee pinnacles defying the fleet of France, he feared they were but the tiny vanguard of England's mighty squadrons. Monroe was the instrument, but Canning was the trumpeter, thought Continental diplomacy. But insomuch as this trumpet sounded a jaunty Republican note Canning could hardly have relished the music. His great plan, by which the United States were to join with him in a declaration which would in effect support England, allegiance, and constitutional liberty against tyranny or democracy, had failed. Moreover Adams had shown a clear desire to draw a dividing line if possible between America and Europe. Towards the double object of defeating the Holy Alliance and checking the United States Canning's policy was now to be directed.

Though displeased with the independent action of the United States, Canning felt he could turn it to account in Europe. He had received a moral support England badly needed, and he further reaped advantage from the fact that the Holy Alliance fancied his actions and those of Monroe were evidence of a secret agreement. He was enabled therefore finally to decline to take any part in the Conference on American affairs, which Ferdinand, France and the Holy Alliance were urging. His firm refusal, announced in December-January, 1823-4, dissolved yet another project of a concert for the Government of the world upon "legitimate" principles. Austria and Russia declared "it would be idle to think of it when Great Britain declines being a party to it." But if he declined Congresses Canning was resolved to introduce Europe into America, though not upon the principles of the Holy Alliance. He would save Cuba, "the pearl of the Antilles," from Yankee clutches, and if possible would reconcile Spain to recognition. The offer of mediation, so often already put forward, was pressed more earnestly than ever.\* He explained that a Spanish acknowledgment of independency would be hailed with pleasure by England, but that our recog-

\* Spain—F.O. 284—Despatches to A'Court—Passim.



dition would not be dependent upon it. Canning seems to have done everything possible to conciliate Spain. He clearly expressed his preference for some kind of monarchical governments established in the revolted colonies. Most of them he said were unsuited to be republics, which the unending cycle of revolution anarchy and dictatorships has certainly proved. He was willing to guarantee Cuba to Spain as the price of recognition, he was even willing that Spain herself should retain certain rights of suzerainty and trade, though an attempt to revive the old exclusive trade monopolies would produce instant recognition from England. Forcible intervention would have the same result, for England took "higher ground than that of commercial facilities." Lastly he warned Spain by England's example in 1783—"to learn the inexpediency of delaying recognition till all the grace of granting it, and all the advantages by which that concession may be compensated, are lost."

Spain shuffled and delayed, invincible in her obstinacy and prejudices. Meanwhile Canning's Commission of Inquiry returned from South America with their report, which gave a general impression that attempts to win back the allegiance of the colonies to Spain by arms or negotiations were in the one case waste of blood and treasure, in the other loss of time and opportunity. As early as March, 1824, Canning perceived that other nations might recognize the South American colonies, and so make the action of England valueless. Chateaubriand, the most enthusiastic agitator for French action, was dismissed the Foreign Office, and Villele in speeches on June 11th and 18th declared non-intervention to be the policy of France. This was a remarkable triumph for Canning and a great blow to the Holy Alliance, for Villele had now proclaimed in Europe what Adams had in America, and both were imitators of Canning. He now feared either that France would forestall England in political recognition, or that despite many disclaimers she would make this offer as a bribe or a threat to obtain some concession, like Cuba, from Spain or her revolted colonies. The Report of the Commission was to be Canning's excuse for recognition, and it must be admitted that body had somewhat misused its advantages. Henry VIII's agents were sent out to destroy the monasteries and adjusted their evidence to their end. Canning's commissioners were at least intended to give as plausible a case as possible for recognition. Mexico was disturbed by the attempts of an adventurer, called Iturbide, to set up an empire, but Colombia, Bolivia, Buenos Ayres and

Chile were under governments as stable and constitutions as good as they have ever been since, though "the present bayonet was often the present god." In Peru only was a balanced struggle maintained, and the victory of Bolivar at Ayacucho in August, 1824, destroyed the last hopes of the Royalists. In July 23rd, 1824, Canning concluded a commercial treaty with Buenos Ayres, and so formal a document amounted almost to political recognition. The French continued to occupy Spain, refusing to say when they would evacuate it. Ferdinand and Alexander continued to fulminate and protest. France and the United States continued their intrigues. The time was clearly action ripe.

It remained only for Canning to overcome the opposition in the Cabinet. Here it was most determined and resolute, headed by Wellington, Sidmouth and Eldon. Wellington thought himself driven by a revolutionary to support revolutionary measures. He offered to resign and bitterly protested against the abandonment of the old principle. Westmoreland, the \* 'sôt privé,' while professing to agree in measures disapproved in words, and communicated his disapproval to the French Court. The King played the most ignoble part of all, openly sending a memorandum of disapproval to the Cabinet, but secretly negotiating with Lieven and Metternich and protesting his desire to dismiss Canning. He used some incredibly † unadvised expressions in a letter to Metternich, but his "intemperance and miscalculation brought this intrigue to a premature denouement and obliged him to give in." Canning would not yield. "A plot was devised for the ides of December to change the policy of the government by changing *me*" he wrote. "I would have resigned on the S.A. question ;

\* So called by the French because he was Privy Seal (sceau).—Sidmouth retired from the Cabinet in consequence of these disputes. He had already resigned the Home-Secretaryship, but had retained a seat in the Cabinet.

† Canning to Granville—March 11 1825 Correspce. Stapleton I. 258, For other details of this royal perfidy v. Tom Moore's *Life and Diary*. V. 230. Canning has often been blamed for appointing Lord Francis Conyngham to be his under Foreign Secretary. Scandal said that it was in order to curry favour with the king. This is unlikely and if it was true it certainly failed in its object. What is more likely is that Lord Francis was, like Sir William Knighton, one of the agents who conducted the royal intrigues with foreign powers. To give him an official position under the Foreign Secretary at once sealed his lips and made him incapable of such action, for which his position at Court especially qualified him. The letter of Canning's we quote lends probability to this suggestion, and shows Canning was determined to stop these intrigues at all hazards, which after 1825 he almost completely succeeded in doing.



and I would have declared openly that I was driven from office by the Holy Alliance ; and, further, that the system, which I found established, of personal communications between the sovereign and foreign Ministers was one under which no English minister could do his duty. If after this . . . the Lievens and Esterhazy did not find London too hot for them I know nothing of the temper of the English nation." The King's public conduct towards Canning resembled his behaviour in private life. One day he fondled poor Perdita Robinson, or plighted his troth to Mrs. Fitzherbert, the next he abandoned the one and betrayed the other. He reversed the process with Canning, in that he began by treachery and ended with affection. But there is enough in his conduct at this time to justify the indescribable bitterness of that satire of Moore's, where he imagines the various courtiers naming their favourite airs, with the result that

" In choosing songs the Regent named ;—  
' Had I a tongue for falsehood framed ! ' "

But opposition open and secret were both in vain. After several cabinets—the last protracted for three hours—Canning emerged flushed and triumphant with his decision carried. On the last day of 1824 he wrote to inform the Spanish Government of his resolve to recognize immediately Columbia, Mexico and Buenos Ayres. He dictated the notes informing those States of his intentions from his bed, to which he was confined by illness. This decision was communicated to Parliament in February in the speech from the throne. As the King had lost his false teeth it fell, ironically enough, to Eldon to deliver it, which he did with a very bad grace and no enthusiasm. The announcement was hailed with equal joy by English merchants and the representatives of the new States. The past enterprises of the British merchants had been characterised by great lack of insight, for they despatched skates and warming-pans to the tropical parts of South America, and sent Highland milkmaids out to manufacture butter in countries, whose inhabitants preferred oil and whose cows disliked being milked. They now not only engaged in these hasty speculations but no longer hesitated to embark in more permanent enterprises, such as mining and territorial concerns. The new States, who drew all their stores from England and were described by Chateaubriand as a species of British colonies, felt an increase in dignity and strength. Their recognition by the United States was a local and as it were parochialme assure

that by England secured them for ever from the Holy Alliance and France, as well as gave them a complete international status and position. It introduced America into Europe and Europe into America, and both were safeguarded from attack by Canning's favourite principle of non-intervention. It was an ingenious and effective answer to the Monroe doctrine. \* "The thing is done. . . an act which will make a change in the face of the world almost as great as that of the discovery of the Continent now set free. The Yankees will shout in triumph, but it is they who lose most by our decision. The great danger of the time, a danger which the European system would have fostered, was a division of the world into European and American, Republican and Monarchical, a league of worn-out governments on the one hand, and of youthful and stirring States, with the United States on the other. *We* slip in between and plant ourselves in Mexico. The United States have got the start of us in vain; and we link once more America to Europe. Six months more, and the mischief would have been done." The recognition was certainly opportune, it bound closer the new States to England, it restrained the pretensions of the Yankees, and preserved Cuba to Spain. The Panama Congress of 1826, where Bolivar discussed the question of a union of American States, was overshadowed by Canning, and partly through his influence the alliance between the United States and the South American Republics was never formed. Over Bolivar Canning had extraordinary influence. The Liberator feared the designs of the United States, and preferred England as a defence against both them and the European Powers. "Bolivar," wrote Sir † Robert Wilson, his constant correspondent and confidant, "is greatly afraid of the old Spaniards and French getting any foothold on the South American continent, and wishes to form as close a union as possible with England." ‡ "Bolivar's esteem for Canning," wrote Ponsonby to Sir Robert Wilson, "as an enlightened and powerful friend to South American prosperity is well founded; because I feel certain of the perfect sincerity with which Canning directed the powers of his mind, of his personal influence, and of his ministerial station, to the perfection of that system of policy which guards American independence and cherishes the

\* Stapleton. E. J. *Correspcce*. I. 267 to Hookham Frere. Jan. 8, 1825.

† Ad. MSS. 30, 132. April 18, 1825.

‡ Ad. MSS. 30, 111. Aug. 1827.



growth of our adolescent strength; and because Mr. C. feels it to the solid interest of his own country to have these vast regions, free, happy and rich." So far then was Canning successful. Recognition was in fact creation, and the international legalizer of a quarter of the globe may be pardoned for a little conscious vanity. It is unfortunate that the politics of South America have afforded more valuable materials to fiction and comic opera than to constitutional text-books. The lack of a middle-class, the mixture of races, the ignorance and corruption, the absence both of traditions and political aptitude, the sluggishness of the climate and the races, have all contributed to this sorry result. But as trade centres they have become increasingly valuable, and as commerce was the \* chief reason of their recognition so it is the chief justification of their existence. Even now nearly a tenth of our exports (some £25,000,000) go to South America, and as we were the first to give them political independence, so they now give economic recognition to such trade of ours as is repelled by the higher tariffs of the nations of Europe. If Canning then was not ultimately a political, he was partially—and to some extent—an economic Columbus.

But at the time the recognition had a European as well as an American aspect. "It has set the Continent quite wild with rage and joy, hope and fear," wrote † Sir Robert Wilson. 'Rely on it, Villèle and Russia will be revenged for the loss of the many Bourbon shares contracted in America, and for the blowing up of the Holy Alliance mine.' The Holy Ambassadors sat in the Spanish Foreign office in permanent consultation over the terrible news. Finally Ferdinand authorised Zea, his Foreign Minister, to reply to Canning characterizing the colonies "as infants in strength but old in crime, supported by ambition and defended by blood and anarchy." He professed first that the colonies were not in a sufficient state of stability, and next that England was encouraging rebellion, by recognizing defacto governments and "making war against the principles of Legitimacy upon which the stability of all the old Governments depend." In point of fact the colonies were probably as stable as the government of old Spain at that time and for the next forty years. But the colonies as de

\* Exports to South America—1822, £3,800,000; 1823, £5,600,000, or about 1/10th of our total exports and far greater than our trade with the United States at this time.

† To Earl Grey Feb. 1st 1825. Ad. MSS. 30, 132 f. 130 Zea's despatch is in Spain F.O. 299. Jan. 21st, 1825.

facto governments could not be recognized by Legitimacy at any time, however stable they might be, so that Zea's two statements were contradictory according to his own principles. Canning replied by utterly denying the theory of legitimacy, "Was a de facto government never to be entitled to recognition? Were time and circumstances never to produce any change? To have continued to call that a possession of Spain in which all Spanish occupation and power had been actually extinguished and effaced could have rendered no practical service to the mother-country, but it would have risked the peace of the world! As all political communities are responsible to other political communities for their conduct, Spain would always be liable to be called to account for the actions of her colonial subjects, over whom she had actually no control. Nothing more ridiculous in fact or more practically inconvenient for Spain herself could well be conceived." This was in words the most effective destruction of legitimacy, and it was supported by deeds, for a whole continent had under Canning's influence defied and disavowed this absurd principle. Legitimacy—the new divine right of kings—now nursed an incurable wound—a most salutary result of the recognition of the New World. No assembly of European crowned heads would now dare or presume to force their governments and principles upon the world. We are told that Cromwell made every king feel a stiffness in his neck, and Canning had made every despot perceive the looseness of his crown.

The direct political effect upon France was as great as the moral effect upon Europe. France had retained Cadiz for the definite if unavowed purpose of wringing concessions from Spain or England. Once the Colonies were recognized it became useless and unnecessary for France to occupy Spain, which they therefore evacuated. Canning in the most famous of all his speeches has vindicated his policy. The speech has indeed a ring of egoism—which his colleagues did not relish—but his almost single-handed struggle in the Cabinet, his endless difficulties and vexations must serve as his excuse. \* "Is the Spain of the present day indeed the nation whose puissance was expected to shake England from her sphere? No, sir, it was Spain "with the Indies" that excited the jealousies and alarmed the imagination of our ancestors. But then, sir, the balance of power! The entry of the French

\* Speech on affairs of Portugal, Dec. 12, 1806.



army into Spain disturbed that balance, and we ought to have gone to war to restore it! To look to the policy of Europe in the times of William and Anne for the purpose of regulating the balance of power in Europe at the present day, is to disregard the progress of events and to confuse dates and facts which throw a reciprocal light upon each other . . . Was there no other mode of resistance than by a direct attack upon France? Might not compensations for disparagement be obtained, and the policy of our ancestors vindicated by means better adapted to the present time? If France occupied Spain, was it necessary in order to avoid the consequences of that occupation—that we should blockade Cadiz? No! I looked another way. I sought materials of compensation in another hemisphere. Contemplating Spain, such as our ancestors had known her, I resolved that if France had Spain, it should not be Spain “with the Indies.” I CALLED THE NEW WORLD INTO EXISTENCE TO REDRESS THE BALANCE OF THE OLD.”

## CHAPTER XI

### THE COLONIES AND THE SLAVE TRADE BRAZIL AND PORTUGAL

DURING 1823 Robinson became Chancellor of the Exchequer and Huskisson President of the Board of Trade; both were followers of Canning, and their influence on the financial system of the country was immediate and beneficial. Huskisson was the best practical financier of his day, and to him Canning generously ascribed "the full and undivided glory" of all the improvements effected by reduced tariffs and new commercial treaties. But Canning proved a great assistance, to him, for his influence carried his measures in the Cabinet, his grasp of general economic principles was firm, and he never consented even to Huskisson's detailed alterations until he had carefully examined the proposals. Canning was in theory a free-trader, but he held that the artificial restraints or stimulations, created by an outworn and unscientific system of protection, must be gradually removed or adjusted to modern conditions. As far back as 1809 Canning had sketched the plan of these reforms, one of the many instances of the continuity of his earlier and late policies. "A liberal system of commerce" he writes \* "formed upon a basis of Reciprocity and mutual convenience, which by discontinuing . . . certain prohibitory duties might procure the most solid advantages on both sides to the national productions and industry, and give due protection at the same time to the public revenue and to the interests of fair and legal trade." He never demanded exclusive rights for England in the matter of trade, † but was prepared to retaliate against

\* The quotation above is from Portugal F.O. 73.

† The famous rhyming despatch is an instance of Retaliation—Canning to Sir Charles Bagot, 1826. (*Note continued p. 193*).



unfair and exceptional treatment. His whole policy was to prepare the way for Free Trade, believing that an increase of commerce and industry in other nations implied no necessary harm to us, and that our commercial prosperity would contribute to that of other countries. The old system of monopoly produced by the Navigation Laws, which required all goods from Africa, Asia and America to be conveyed in British ships, was now obsolete and absurd. Robinson and Huskisson repealed these old statutes, swept away discriminating duties revised and limited the articles on which duties and excise was exacted, especially the heavy duties levied on raw materials, codified the customs law, and promoted Reciprocity. The old absurd and excessive impositions were reduced or abandoned, and new commercial treaties negotiated with every Power. The result of these wise measures was to evoke order from chaos, to adjust our revenue to a peace footing and our tariff to new conditions and demands. When we recollect the incidents of the skates and the milkmaids, which were by no means isolated, it is not surprising that there were failures among the merchants and traders. But the many and constant commercial crises of the time, especially the panic of 1825, were abated in violence and narrowed in range and extent by these wise measures of the Government. Yet a greater service than all these was the removal of the system, which had cramped and bound trade between England and her colonies who however shared in the Navigation Laws. The reversal of that narrow and selfish economic policy, which England had forced on her colonies, was the prelude not only to their prosperity, but to that larger political freedom which they were one day to enjoy. It showed the Home Government were at length conscious of duties toward their Colonies, anxious to promote their welfare

*Continued from p. 192.*

"In matters of commerce the fault of the Dutch  
Is giving too little and asking too much,  
With equal protection the French are content,  
So we'll lay on Dutch bottoms just twenty per cent,  
*Chorus of Officers*;—'We'll lay on, etc.'"

Chorus of douaniers "nous frapperons Falck avec twenty per cent." The actual form and existence of this famous and unhappily unique despatch were questioned a few years ago. Fortunately the true and proper version has been discovered at the Foreign Office, a copy of which is placed at the Record Office, Holland, F. O. 147. The date is between Jan. 31st. and Feb. 20th. 1826, and is probably the earlier date. The circumstances explain themselves, but it may be noted that Falck was the Dutch Foreign Minister.

and ready to make sacrifices in their favour. Towards all this wide adjustment of our commercial relations Canning greatly contributed by advice influence and support, whilst his policy aimed as much at commercial security as at political influence.

In only one respect was Canning willing to make some sacrifice of our commercial interests, and that was in his attempts to abolish the Slave-trade. From the moment of his entry into political life he had advocated that cause. He had even quarrelled with Pitt, because that Minister, though prodigal of eloquent platitudes, had done nothing to alleviate the conditions or abolish the practice of slavery. It is perhaps the gravest charge against him as a minister, for a stroke of his pen would at once have produced an order in Council to that effect. Canning's first great speech on the subject was on March 1st, 1799, when he attacked those who pleaded age and long usage as a defence of slavery. "Has the slave trade," he asked indignantly, "to plead former merits, services and glories on behalf of its present foulness and disgrace? . . . No, its infant lips were stained with blood. Its whole existence has been a series of rapacity, cruelty and murder." On May 27th, 1802, he introduced a motion requesting the Government to use the newly-acquired island of Trinidad as an experiment in abolition. In this place at least it might be abolished, traders must understand that they would receive no compensation in such a case, large grants and sales of property to capitalists might be prevented, and the native population might be assigned land and reared on the soil. The proposal, though statesmanlike and backed by a wealth of arguments, was rejected. In 1807 Fox carried an Act abolishing slavery for English owners, Canning dissenting on purely technical and, it must be admitted, factious grounds. But the colonial slavery still remained and other countries seized advantage from our cessation, and increased their unhallowed traffic. While in office (1807-9) even amid the death struggle with Napoleon, Canning endeavoured to restrict and lessen this evil. Many projects were discussed, a treaty with Portugal and Brazil restricted their areas of slave-traffic exclusively to land south of the line, and pressure was brought to bear on Tunis and the Porte. Castlereagh afterwards obtained a denunciation of slavery from the Congress of Vienna, and subsequently pressed for its abolition.

"The slave trade requires no comments," wrote Castlereagh



in his Instructions for Verona. All the difference between him and Canning is here expressed. The one was cold and indifferent, the other warm-hearted, generous and passionate. Canning felt that comments were urgently needed, and wrote a lengthy despatch to Wellington immediately to press the question of\* "that scandal of the civilised world." The restrictions had not been all for good, as "the dread of detection suggests expedients of concealment productive of the most dreadful sufferings to a cargo, of which it hardly ever seems to occur to its remorseless owners that it consists of sentient beings. . . . The probable profits are notoriously calculated only on the survivors, and the mortality is accordingly frightful to a degree unknown, since the attention of mankind was first called to the horror of this traffic." France, in spite of protests, was a great offender. He proposes, if all else fails, to secure abolition by purchase. This policy had already succeeded under his direction (1809) wholly with Spain and partly with Portugal, and was eventually to be the method of bringing our colonies to acquiescence. He now used every effort to bring about amelioration and improvement of the slave's lot by an Order in Council. Though hampered by some colleagues and opposed by others—especially the procrastinating Eldon†—he at length brought his resolutions before Parliament.

On March 24th, 1824, Canning introduced and carried his proposals, which were based on his motion of twenty years before, but he declared them no longer an experiment, but an example. A series of enactments provided for the gradual amelioration of the condition of the slave. Schools and churches were to be established for his instruction in secular and religious knowledge. Marriage among slaves was to be encouraged, families were under no circumstances to be separated by purchase and placed on different estates. The slave was given a legal position, he was to be capable of holding and transmitting property, and able to purchase the freedom of himself and his family. Banks were to be established for his savings. His evidence was to be admissible in a court of law, on the certificate of his instructors and teachers. Sunday markets and labour were to cease, and the shocking and degrading practice of applying the whip to females was to be abolished. The use of the whip

\* Oct. 15, 1822, F.O. Continent 46.

† Correspondence. Stapleton, E.J. I, 47.

was retained for males, but was carefully regulated and defined. These were gradual and partial measures, but it was useless to urge total abolition, and expect instant effect from a single enactment. Carefully graduated measures would not only free individual slaves, but abolish the status altogether. "In dealing with the negro, we must remember that we are dealing with a being possessing the form and strength of a man, but the intellect only of a child. To turn him loose in the manhood of his physical strength, in the maturity of his physical passions, but in the infancy of his uninstructed reason, would be to raise up a creature resembling the splendid fiction of a\* recent romance; the hero of which constructs a human form, with all the corporeal capabilities of a man, and with the thews and sinews of a giant; but being unable to impart to the work of his hands a perception of right and wrong, he finds too late that he has only created a more than mortal power of doing mischief, and himself recoils from the monster he has made." What is all the sad and disillusioning history of the relations of Europeans to the subject races of the tropics during the last century but the truest confirmation of these words! How infinitely superior is the statesman with his practical insight, when accompanied as here with deep feeling and sympathy, to the mere emotional and reckless clamour of even such disinterested and wise abolitionists as Wilberforce or Clarkson!

In his resolve to ameliorate the conditions of the slave, Canning was certain to meet with determined colonial opposition. The Crown Colony Governments—such as Trinidad or St. Lucia—could be easily persuaded, but with a colony like Jamaica, possessed of a parliament with large legislative powers, it was more difficult to deal. Its members protested against the interference of the Home Government with the most unmeasured violence. The old Tory methods suggested the application of direct force, or a more hateful and insidious compulsion, by harassing them with fiscal regulations or enactments restraining their navigation. Canning advocated the slow and silent course of temperate but authoritative admonition. The insults levelled at the English Parliament he disregarded, her supreme unquestioned authority he was unwilling either to enforce or even to assert. He would treat the patriotic and furious agitator of the Jamaica assembly with patience and humour, "by taking from him all

\* "*Frankenstein*," by Mrs. Shelley. The earliest and the only happy use of this simile.



lofty grounds of quarrel, by disappointing his patriotic ardour of contentious topics of inflammation; and by leaving him to found his insurrection, if insurrection he will have, on an abstract admiration of the cartwhip, and a resolute claim of his freeborn right to use that instrument at his pleasure." In 1819,\* Goulburn had defined our relations with the colonies as follows; we retained "a monopoly of colonial commerce," in return for affording them protection and defence. Canning had already relaxed this economic control, and his attitude on this political question was reasonable and moderate. Perhaps no statesman, previous to Lord Durham, viewed the connection between the colonies and the motherland in so just and steady a light. No man saw with more pride the vast extent of our empire, but none knew better the slenderness of its links of union, no man was more anxious to pursue a policy of conciliation and compromise towards the colonies, to promote unity of sentiment and interest, and to introduce into the Old World the vigour and ideas of the New.

The history of our negotiations with Brazil and Portugal (1822-7) shows the later developments of Canning's political and commercial system. After the Portuguese Court had retired to Brazil during the Napoleonic invasion, the colony rather than the mother-country became the centre of the Portuguese Empire. Grandiose schemes were meditated in the New World and Portugal bitterly complained of neglect. More than once the Court had promised to return, and Canning had vainly proceeded as plenipotentiary to Lisbon to welcome it. This discontent at its delay united with other causes to produce the Liberal revolution of 1820. The Council of Regency was dissolved and a popular constitution was proclaimed. In July, 1821, however the King unexpectedly returned from Brazil, swore to accept the constitution and succeeded in producing tranquillity. Castlereagh had observed the attitude indicated in the State paper of 5th May, 1820, and had advised the King to accept what he could save from the wreck of his power. The invasion of Spain by France in 1823 awakened the ambitions of Portugal.† De Neuville the French ambassador secretly urged the Portuguese to join Angoulême in the attack upon Cadiz. He also intimated—with the implied consent of the ambassadors of Spain and the

\* "The principle he said was based on sound policy and ought not rashly to be abandoned." Canning had other views.

† Canning to A'Court, Spain. F. O. 300, Dec. 15. 1823.

Holy Alliance—that his most faithful Majesty of Portugal would receive support if he decided to “improve the internal institutions of his kingdom,” and determined “to maintain his royal authority absolute and unfettered by the grant of new or revival of ancient institutions.” Canning held fast to his policy of non-interference. He declared “*no combination of great Powers can justify the infliction of injury upon a smaller one*,” and announced that England though having nothing to do with the internal institutions of Portugal, was bound by treaty to defend her if attacked or if any attempt was made by a foreign Power to control the free agency of the King of Portugal. Canning thus shielded Portugal from other Powers, who proposed to force on her the principles of Legitimacy. But at the same time he told her that, if she engaged in an unjust aggression upon Spanish territory, England’s obligations to defend her would be annulled. This admirably firm and resolute language restrained the ambitious designs of Portugal. Canning, while expressly disclaiming the right of authoritative interference, warned the King by the example of Spain to maintain his promise to grant a constitution. The King adopted this advice and called moderate Liberals to his ministerial council. Though a request for British troops was refused a British squadron was sent to the Tagus, to provide for the personal safety of the King in case of need.

During the winter of 1823 the Absolutists headed by the Queen and Miguel—the heir-apparent and commander-in-chief—gained ground and were secretly encouraged by de Neuville and the Holy Alliance. The Marquis de Loulé, the Master of the Horse, was secretly murdered, and on April 30th, 1824, Don Miguel made several arrests and invested the royal palace with his troops. After a week of anxiety and suspense the King sought refuge on a British man-of-war. This clever move brought Don Miguel to his senses, but it remained to restore order and tranquillity. De Neuville at once came forward and offered to give the loan of the French garrison of Badajoz. The King rejected this insidious proposal and asked for aid from England. Never was Canning in a more terrible difficulty. To accept would amount to an interference in internal affairs which he so constantly deprecated, to refuse would be to admit a French army into Portugal and to throw the King unreservedly into French hands. It was in any case impossible to send troops in time to be of service without summoning Parliament. Canning, however, solved the difficulty by proposing to send the German troops of the



Elector of Hanover, who thus waived his authority as King of England. Meantime he redoubled his remonstrances to France. Chateaubriand, who had been the arch-deviser of the intrigues carried out by De Neuville, was now dismissed. Villèle, who was trying to apply Canning's policy on a humbler and smaller scale to the affairs of France, now proclaimed his adherence to the principle of non-intervention. He disavowed all the actions of De Neuville and recalled him for exceeding his powers. Meanwhile the ever-faithful A'Court, despatched to Lisbon in September, succeeded in completely restoring British influence.

While the King of Portugal had been victorious over one rebellious son in the Old World, he had been vanquished by another in the New. Before leaving Brazil in 1821 he had made large concessions to that province, given it an independent status and a supreme court of judicature, and made his son Pedro Regent. But no sooner did the Brazilians feel the balance of dignity and power shifted from Rio to Lisbon than they began to complain. Their restlessness coincided with the most extravagant attempts on the part of the Portuguese Cortes to re-establish their old authority. Don Pedro—placed between the alternatives of abdication or separation—chose the latter. He shewed a true popular instinct and cleverly won the Liberals over to his side. In 1822 he was proclaimed Emperor of Brazil and at once granted a liberal constitution and avowed his independence of Portugal. Superior both in size, wealth, and population Brazil would no longer submit to the dictation of a petty European State. Canning interposed the good offices of England, after Commissioners sent out from Lisbon had been turned back from the harbour at Rio. On September 2nd, 1823, Canning held a conference with the Portuguese ambassador. He informed him that England conceived it hopeless for Portugal to attempt to recover Brazil by force. Her *de facto* political independence must be recognized and a return to the old system of exclusive trade monopoly was impossible. But England attached great importance to the continuance of the monarchical or rather imperial form of government in Brazil, and hoped for a union of the American and European parts of the Portuguese dominion under the House of Braganza. But everything failed : Portugal, not content with a nominal superiority and a preferential advantage in trade, stipulated for absolute supremacy, which Brazil haughtily declined to acknowledge. A conference between Brazilian and Portuguese plenipo-

tentiaries, attended by the Austrian ambassador and presided over by Canning, was opened in July, 1824, at London. It was not to be supposed that the Holy Allies would cease their intrigues. Austria, Russia and Prussia had already remonstrated with the King of Portugal for his liberalism. Though they\* "had not a transmarine colony, not a single sail on the ocean which washed the shores of South America, nor a bale of goods in the ports, they now issued protocols which calmly discussed the relation of a mother-country to its Colonies, and recommended perpetual war between them, by which both might be destroyed, rather than that any influence dangerous to legitimacy should be drawn from a compromise by which both might be saved." A *contre projet* was then drawn up by the Portuguese ministry on legitimist lines, and circulated through the Courts of Europe.

Canning's project was thus rejected, but he soon showed he would submit to no interference. England had been asked to mediate, she would not therefore allow the reference of this question to a Congress. Sir Charles Stuart was despatched as Plenipotentiary to Lisbon, to consult with the King and arrange possible terms, before proceeding as mediator to Brazil. But even when thus affronted by the absurd proposals of the *Contre Projet* Canning's policy was disinterested and moderate. He even offered to waive all commercial advantages secured by the treaty, which he had himself negotiated with Brazil in 1809 and which had been "profoundly beneficial" to England, if that would facilitate agreement between Portugal and Brazil. Such abnegation is rare indeed in diplomacy. Canning at the same time, knowing that Metternich desired the separation of the two crowns of Brazil and Portugal so long as the principle of Legitimacy could be saved, skilfully used the influence of Austria to back Sir Charles Stuart in his mission. Stuart signed a treaty at Rio in August, 1825, recognizing the independence of Brazil, and promoting a friendly intercourse between the two nations. Last of all Canning used this opportunity to obtain from Brazil, as from all the other American colonies, a promise to abolish the slave-trade. Brazil had however been the worst offender and the most frequent merchant in this infamous traffic. Don Pedro hesitated and demurred but Canning was firm. The last formalities of a treaty definitely abolishing the slave trade

\* Stapleton. *Pol. Life*, III. 304-5.



between Africa and Brazil were at length concluded eight days after the chief negotiator was no more (Aug. 17th, 1827).

But hardly was a separation between Brazil and Portugal effected than chance again wrought their union. In March, 1826, the King of Portugal died, with his last breath banishing Don Miguel, and appointing his daughter Isabella Maria (not yet of age) Regent with a council. The Crown legally devolved on his imperial son Don Pedro, for Sir Charles Stuart's treaty had said nothing of the succession. Don Miguel was in exile, but possessed a large body of adherents in the army and among the Absolutists of Portugal. The Holy Allies, the Kings of Spain and France, at once saw opportunities to interfere. Don Pedro proceeded to grant a fresh\* constitution to Portugal, to appoint a Regency, and to use ambiguous phrases which did not definitely imply that he was resigning the Portuguese Crown. Sir Charles Stuart, divested of his diplomatic character, carried this Charter to Portugal. This was unfortunate, because it gave the impression that England was forcing her own principles upon Portugal. Stuart was now a private individual and behaved with extraordinary indiscretion. But so anxious was Canning to secure to Portugal the benefits of Constitutional government, that he stretched a point and refused explicitly to disavow him. He urged the Regency to accept Don Pedro's proposals, though he declared the Constitution could not be valid unless accepted by the Portuguese nation, as represented by the Cortes or some other body.

Canning's advocacy was successful ; the Infanta Maria and the Cortes accepted the Constitutional Charter on August 1st, 1826. So deadly a foe was Metternich to representative government that, though he desired the separation of Brazil and Portugal, he urged the Emperor Pedro to continue the connection until he could abolish some of "the more objectionable (i.e. popular) features of the constitution." The ambassadors of the Holy Allies, with those of France Sardinia, Denmark and Spain, absented themselves from the ceremony of the Installation of the Constitutional Charter. Canning pointed out with biting sarcasm to these Powers that the Legitimacy which they professed meant that the sovereign should not grant a constitution save of his own free will. If, as all admitted, Don Pedro had granted it freely, where was

\* The constitution of 1820-1 had been at length abrogated by John VI.

the case for interference or dissent? Canning could afford to laugh at the Allies, but the French troops still occupied Spain. Don Pedro's concessions had been intentionally ambiguous, so that if he saw the chance he might reassert his authority. Canning held that the acceptance of the constitution in effect ended Don Pedro's authority; he gave him full credit for his sacrifice, but would not let him recall what he had already given. But Ferdinand of Spain, the most irreconcilable of bigots, just now at the height of reaction, was the most dangerous enemy to the new constitution. Pedro's ambiguities and Don Miguel's claims afforded him a pretext for interference and intrigue. Some Portuguese troops openly acknowledged Don Miguel, mercenaries and volunteers began to arm and assemble in Spain with the avowed object of overthrowing the Portuguese Constitution. Ferdinand openly encouraged them and refused to acknowledge the Regency. Canning used every effort to calm the just resentment felt by the Portuguese Regency. He was in Paris during October, 1826, where he took so firm a line that Damas, the French Minister, at once disclaimed all intentions of interference on the part of France. At the same time Canning steadfastly refused to do anything which would make England appear to be forcing a constitution upon Portugal. Bound to defend that country if its territory was invaded, he refused to guarantee the succession, or to send troops to interfere in its internal concerns or in the civil war now proceeding. But bodies of men armed, clothed and regimented by Spain now made actual incursions into Portuguese territory. When the Portuguese ministry made her formal demands for assistance against these men, in virtue of the old treaty rights, Canning's opportunity for vindicating the honour of England had come.

During his first ministry Canning had, in despatching expeditions to Denmark and Portugal, shown the utmost decision and energy. So it was now to be. "On last Friday," explained Canning to the Commons, "precise information arrived. On Saturday His Majesty's confidential servants came to a decision. On Sunday that decision received the sanction of His Majesty. On Monday it was communicated to both Houses of Parliament—and this day (12th Decr., 1826)—at the hour in which I have the honour of addressing you—the troops are on their march for embarkation. . . . Let us fly to the aid of Portugal, by whomsoever attacked; because it is our duty to do so; and let us cease our interference where that duty ends. We go to Portugal, not to rule, not to



dictate, not to prescribe constitutions—but to defend and preserve the independence of an ally. We go to plant the standard of England on the heights of Lisbon. Where that standard is planted foreign dominion shall not come.” It was Canning’s third master-stroke. The two former had wrenched naval power from the grasp of Napoleon, the third defended a principle and a nation against assault. On the 25th December, 4000 English troops sailed up the Tagus whose banks were lined with shouting crowds. The insurgents and Spanish mercenaries were completely defeated. Canning declared his measure to be one for defence of Portugal not for war against Spain. Ferdinand thoroughly cowed seized eagerly at the excuse, disavowed all knowledge of the operations, allowed Portuguese deserters to be sent back to Lisbon, and recognized the Regency. Without Canning’s promptitude war could only have been a question of days, for the Portuguese Government was to the last degree infuriated with Ferdinand’s outrageous violations of neutrality. Canning preferred to nip growing hostilities in the ear, rather than let aggressions ripen into maturity, that they might be mowed down by the scythe of a magnificent war.

Portuguese affairs were far indeed from a state of tranquillity. To the last Canning was engaged in their arrangement, and he proposed the eventual settlement by which Miguel married Maria. But for many years the dreary struggle with the Miguelites proceeded, and the people learned but slowly the lessons of constitutional government. But the more general effect was decisive and complete, not only throughout Spain but throughout Europe. Spain was humbled, the Holy Allies cowed, the principles of Legitimacy opposed by arms. Striving to hold the balance high, Canning had shown that he would yet unsheath the sword in defence of the principle of non-intervention—if it was too often and too outrageously violated. In Spain he had not interfered, in Portugal he had shown that he would not hesitate. Old treaty rights indeed claimed his assistance, but he had also shown that the intrigues of the Holy Alliance would turn England from her attitude of absolute neutrality. With every desire to let each country choose its own institutions, he had yet been driven from his neutrality by opposition to the principles of Legitimacy.\* “We are anxious beyond measure for the prosperous and unmolested establishment of free institutions

\* Sept. 9. 1826, Canning to A’Court, Portugal F.O. 306.

in Portugal. We trust they will take root and flourish. They shall not if we can help it be assailed from without . . . that the present system of government in Spain cannot be long maintained against the nearest example of free institutions may be true. But the conviction of the probability of this silent moral operation does not justify any attempt to precipitate it, by forcing upon the adoption of one nation the principles or practice of another." Thus he warned Portugal not to undertake a crusade against despotism in Spain, but he had himself been driven to a definite encouragement of Portuguese constitutionalism, which the presence of a British fleet and soldiers assured and maintained. By adopting a qualified neutrality and inclining the balance definitely against despotism Canning's influence had greatly increased. The opposition leaders ceased to oppose, and vied with one another in his praise. The Holy Alliance trembled at his name. They shuddered at every speech he made, for they knew his words were as other men's deeds. Metternich called him the "scourge of England," and said "he had flashed like a malevolent meteor through Europe." Canning could have desired no better tribute from the Holy Allies. The peoples were everywhere on his side, his speeches were the text-book of all Liberals, his portrait hung in the huts of peasants, England was the land of liberty and of Canning. Wherever there was oppression or misery or injustice men remembered his name, and were filled with hope. To this dazzling height had Canning at length raised his own glory and that of his country.



## CHAPTER XII

### THE FREEDOM OF GREECE [1821-7]

"AFTER so many centuries of tribulation lo! the Phoenix of Greece majestically unfolds her wings, and unties under her shadow her genuine and submissive children." With this proclamation Alexander Ypsilanti invaded Moldavia, and raised the standard of Greek independence in the February of 1821. In the time of their strength the Turkish rule had not been unusually oppressive, and there is little doubt that in the seventeenth and even in the early part of the eighteenth century the Christians of Eastern Europe were almost as ready to be ruled by them as by the House of Austria. But the invariable rule of the Porte has been to redress the balance of military defeat by the gain in civic authority, which it proceeds to strengthen and secure by the coercion or massacre of some of its Christian subjects. At the same time that the Turkish government, conscious of its external weakness, was increasing its domestic oppression, its Greek population was reviving the Hellenic tongue and with it the old sense of nationality, the old contempt and hatred of barbarians. The student or the dreamer thought, with idle indignation, how the presence of savage and brutal Mussulmen defiled the marble ruins and profaned the sacred mountains where the bright gods of old had dwelt. The sturdy mountaineers and the rough bands of Klephts or brigands hated the Turks with the undying hatred they extended to all settled forms of government. The wealth and the commerce of Greece had trained a hardy race of sailors and increased the independence and population of the towns. To all these elements of discord were added the ideas of the French Revolution. The presence of France, and afterwards

of England, in the Ionian Isles filled the Greeks with hope and promoted a desire for independence. This was also fanned by the sympathy of their co-religionists in Russia, and of the Czar Alexander, who had at one time posed as the champion of Liberalism and as the friend of Greece. The eloquent Capodistrias, a Greek of the islands, was his minister, and openly avowed his Hellenic sympathies. A secret society—the Hetaeria Philike—was formed to give independence to Greece, and its leaders assured their followers that the Czar was a member and a secret supporter. Ali Pasha—the ambitious ruler of Albania and Epirus—secretly gave them arms, encouragement, and money. Utterly unscrupulous, brave as a hero and cunning as a trickster, Ali is one of the most picturesque ruffians that Turkish or indeed any history can produce. In him met and were blended the extraordinary contrasts and vicissitudes of the East, where one man could thus play the parts both of Robin Hood and Warwick the king-maker. From a herd boy he rose to be a brigand chief, from a captain of outlaws to the most famous general and most powerful subject of the Sultan. The snows of eighty years had not chilled his ambition, and he aspired to hew out a kingdom from the dying Turkish empire, perhaps even to overthrow the Sultan himself. Therefore, while utterly unlettered, he posed as a patron of the arts, and played Maecenas to the poor literary scholars of Hellenism, and though utterly selfish and ambitious, intrigued with the Hetaerists and professed a desire to further the independence of Greece. When Ypsilanti's Moldavian revolt ended in utter failure and in the Czar denouncing and disavowing him, the Hetaerists were flung back upon themselves and upon Ali, who now declared war against the Sultan. They were encouraged by the success of his open revolt and the whole of the Morea speedily lit the torch of insurrection.

Though the Greek rising thus originated so largely in specific and peculiar causes, Castlereagh could write as follows: \* “The insurrection throughout European Turkey, in its organization, in its objects, in its agency, and in its external relations is in no respects distinguishable from the movements in Spain, Portugal and Italy; whatever may be the views of the Turkish power it is at least exempt from the revolutionary danger. The cause of the Greeks is deeply and inevitably tainted with it.” This extract illustrates the

\* December 14th, 1821. Desp. XII. 444.



usual lack of insight and imagination Castlereagh's statesmanship displayed. He remained neutral, true to the principles of non-intervention adopted in 1820, but directed every effort to maintain the peace between Russia and Turkey. The Porte suspected Alexander of intrigues with the Hetaerists and Ali Pasha. A Turkish mob attacked the Russian Embassy, and the tone of Turkish despatches became intolerably insulting. The Czar withdrew his ambassador and for a time war seemed imminent, and was loudly called for by the people of Russia. But Alexander had repented his former Liberalism in sack-cloth and taken Metternich for his Father-superior. The Austrian diplomat now urged to his convert with irresistible effect that separate action was at variance with the principles of the moral union, and, moreover, that the Turkish was a "legitimate" government, and therefore the Greeks must not be assisted. His triumph was complete and the calamities of war were for a time averted. Lord Strangford, the English ambassador, undertook the task of reconciling the Porte and the Czar. It will be seen therefore that the one service done by the Holy Alliance was to prevent this war. But it is also perfectly clear that this service to the peace of the world was the individual gain of Austria, which cleverly checked the Russian influence or aggression upon Turkey and left the Greeks to their fate, by invoking the sacred theory of Legitimacy. It was on this suspicion of the individual interests of each nation using the union for its own purposes, that Canning played in order to dissolve the Holy Alliance.

On July 9th, 1822, Castlereagh wrote to Strangford, "I fear \* a negotiation on the frontiers, even if yielded by the Porte, will only entangle the diplomatic discussions, *encourage the Greeks to resist* (marginal note by Lord Castlereagh in pencil, 'delete this if it should ever be published'), and finally bring us next spring to the probable issue of war." Castlereagh it will be seen was not enthusiastic, and detested and feared the Greek movement. In his Verona memorandum he suggested that every means should be used to soften the warfare between Turks and Greeks, but refused to recognize the latter as belligerents. These instructions Canning supplemented on September 24th, 1822. The amnesty to the Greeks must be of the most liberal and comprehensive kind, and a promise of future good government must be extracted from

\* F.O. Turkey 105.

he Porte\* whatever might be our wishes, our prejudices, our sympathies, we are bound in political justice to respect that national independence, which in case of civil commotion we should expect to be respected in our own. Nor was it for a Christian Government, which rules . . . over a population of millions of Mahomedans, to proclaim a war of religion." If Turkey granted our demands and Greece refused them it would be impossible to force them upon her, and we do not know to what concessions they would agree. Interference on behalf of the Greeks is therefore impossible at present, except in the demand for a full amnesty and a promise of good government from the Turks.

"Coffee, pipes, and preliminary deliberations" was Lord Strangford's summary of his confidential interviews with the Porte. This snail-paced diplomacy of the East did not suit the vigorous Canning. He instructed† Strangford to say that the English Government "must no longer be amused by unmeaning promises; they appeal to the honour of the Sultan for facts." But the Turkish Government continued a course of petty insult towards Russia culminating in putting restraints in the way of Russian commerce. This was a masterpiece of folly as it enlisted the Russian merchants on the side of war, and Canning lost no time in pointing out that "facts were of much more importance in this case than any reasoning founded on an abstract right of the Porte to give a preference to her own navigation." At the same time that Canning thus impressed the Porte with the practical side of his policy, he displayed the most romantic adherence to truth in diplomacy even in the smallest details. On ‡ September 16th, 1823, Strangford formulated his demands and presented a note to the Sultan, which he said had been drawn up in London. Canning at once remonstrated "not because there is anything in it which your government hesitates to sanction, but simply because such was not the fact." This well illustrates and proves, though proof is needless, Lady Canning's assertion that "it was an invariable

\* F.O. Continent, 46. Canning to Wellington at Verona.

Observe there is no word here of favour to Turkey because she is not "revolutionary" whereas Greece is. Quite the reverse in fact "whatever our sympathies," etc. This Despatch therefore is something more than supplementary in the ordinary sense.

† February 14th, 1823, F.O. 113 Turkey.

‡ F.O. Turkey 113. The other quotation from Lady Canning's pamphlet on Portugal, p.36.



principle of his foreign policy to act with good faith whatever might be the consequence."

The progress of the Greek Revolution had, despite some reverses, been rapid and successful. Ali Pasha, after successfully defying the whole forces of the Ottoman Empire, had at length been vanquished and slain. The peaceful island of Chios had been wantonly attacked by the Turks and 30,000 of its inhabitants slaughtered or sold into slavery. But this brutal massacre was speedily avenged, for Constantine Kanares blew up two of the chief Turkish men-of-war with fireships and so terrified the rest of the fleet, that they fled for refuge beneath the guns of the Golden Horn. On land the Greeks were equally successful in 1821-2, in spite of the fact that the Turkish forces acting against Ali were now released. A Turkish army of 30,000 men invaded the Morea and all resistance seemed over. But by the undaunted courage and irregular genius of Kolokotrones, a rude brigand-chief, this vast force was not only defeated but almost annihilated. At the sametime another Turkish army was repulsed from Missolonghi, and scattered bands of mountaineers everywhere inflicted great losses, whilst the bold sailors of Hydra and Spezia almost destroyed the Turkish commerce. Greece seemed near the *de facto* stage of independence and the Sultan, driven to desperation, sought aid from his powerful satrap Mehemet Ali, the Khedive of Egypt. The Greek successes had aroused extraordinary enthusiasm throughout Europe. The classic land of Liberty had at length begun to revive its departed fame. Lord Byron sang in passionate strains of the glories of the past and the slavery of the present, and sacrificed his fortune and his life to the cause. Lord Frederic North gave a perverted example of the same ardour by twisting a gold band in his hair, assuming a purple robe, and walking about the Morea calling on the Greeks to recognize him as Plato! English subscriptions poured into the Greek war-chest, English volunteers enlisted in the army. Everywhere sentimentalists gushed and classical scholars wept to think of the return of Liberty to its ancient birthplace.

The realities of the revolution had they been known were calculated to chill the enthusiasms of all but the most sanguine. Every great moment or upheaval will bring to its surface leaders of two kinds. There will be sentimental visionary and high-principled fanatics, like Robespierre or Vergniaud, who conceal their absence of practical knowledge and their lack of business ability beneath a flood of eloquence

and emotion. There will also be ruthless and too practical adventurers, men like Kolokotrones or Bolivar, who veil their own selfish and interested designs beneath professions of the noblest sentiments. Revolutions can seldom have lasting success, unless the principles of the one class are united to the courage and ability of the other, as in such men as Déak or Washington. But the Greek revolution exhibited both types in the highest separate perfection, the visionaries more than usually divorced from fact, the men of action more than usually attached to the spoils and the plunder. As a consequence dissension corruption, and selfishness abounded. Civil war burst forth and Kolokotrones, who had never been vanquished by the Turks, was overcome and imprisoned by his countrymen. On all these proceedings Canning was forced to look with the critical eye of the statesman. His private sympathies had been expressed in an early poem on the "Slavery of Greece," published in the *Microcosm*.

'Such was thy State, but oh ! how changed thy fame,  
And all thy glories fading into shame.  
What ! that they hold thy freedom-breathing land  
Should crouch beneath a tyrant's stern command !  
That servitude should bind in galling chain  
Whom Asia's millions once opposed in vain.  
. . . The glittering tyranny of Othman's sons,  
The pomp of horror which surrounds their thrones,  
Has awed their servile spirits into fear,  
Spurned by the foot they tremble and revere.'

There is no reason to suppose that these feelings had changed. But the statesman cannot think as the private individual, for the one necessarily curtails his enthusiasm within the bounds of his responsibilities, the other as naturally expands it beyond the limits of the practical. "There is no denying," said Stratford Canning, though an ardent sympathiser, "that with few exceptions the Greeks are a most rascally set." England had found it impossible, because of their disunion and corruption, to grant self-government to the Ionian Islanders, whom Sir Thomas Maitland ("King Tom of Corfu") ruled with an iron hand. This example must have been before George Canning, who knew too much of history to believe that men oppressed with centuries of tyranny, servitude, and misrule could immediately learn the art of government and the practice of virtue. He laughed at the pretensions of "Epaminondas and Co.," being the last to think that men called Leonidas Aristides and Odysseus would mechanically assume the virtues of their names. The first condition of



recognizing their independence was that they should show stability of government, and this they could not as yet offer. But however cautious and critical he might be, Canning had yet shown undisguised sympathy for the insurgents, and had recognized them as belligerents which the other Powers had refused to do.

The first project of intervention came as usual from Alexander. He circulated a note on January 12th, 1824, proposing that the Powers should unite in a congress to enforce on the Porte the acceptance of a scheme which would turn Greece into three Principalities—all autonomous and all governed in the name of the Sultan. The Czar had already established a sort of protectorate over Moldavia and Wallachia and this proposal would have done the same for all Greece. This suggestion really deceived no one as it was purely drawn in the interests of Russia. Canning alone among British statesmen had grasped the strategic importance of the mastery of the Mediterranean. He had denounced the peace of Amiens because by surrendering Malta it abandoned that control. Now that England also ruled the Ionian Isles he was not likely to give Russia a qualified right of interference in all Turkish and Greek affairs, knowing as he did how Castlereagh had discovered and repelled Russian intrigues against "King Tom" and his Ionian dependencies. But Canning might possibly have overcome his vehement objections to Congresses and trusted to re-establish English influence at them, if either of the belligerents had favoured the proposals. This would have saved his favourite principle of non-intervention. But the Turks protested vehemently, and in August, 1824, a Greek deputation waited on Canning to denounce the Czar's proposals as cruel and oppressive, and the intervention of the Powers as uninvited and tyrannical. Canning announced that England could be no party to the conference, and declared that England would agree to no proposals to which the Greeks did not themselves consent.

Stratford Canning, cousin of the Foreign Secretary, had been appointed special plenipotentiary to St. Petersburg. He owed his diplomatic success largely to the influence of his kinsman by whose ideas he was greatly impressed. Stratford, though appointed before Canning's refusal to accede to the conference, was ordered still to proceed to Russia. Two conditions were laid down as essential to England's consent to a Congress. The first was the complete resumption of diplomatic intercourse between the Czar and the Porte by the

return of Ribeaupierre the Russian ambassador, the second a "previous and public disavowal of force," by all the Powers. These conditions effectually prevented either Russian aggrandisement or a Legitimist Crusade, and thus once again Canning had baffled the Holy Alliance. On his way to Russia Stratford passed through Vienna, and his private letters to his cousin give a humorous and vivid picture of the old diplomacy. Metternich \* "assured me in candour that he did not consider you a very extravagant example of Liberalism but only slightly dangerous as encouraging, without meaning it, characters less favourable to order than yourself." He spoke with regret of the old times—of the comfort, convenience, and efficacy of settling matters of state by conversation at a round table—falsely termed a conference—and by the meeting of two prime ministers belonging to countries essentially pacific and identified in their leading interests like Austria and England. In a word I conceive that *he would be delighted to have you enter into the same sort of understanding with him that your predecessor did*; but I am much mistaken if he be not prepared to do you all the mischief in his power—whatever that may be—as soon as he loses all hope of making a tolerable colleague of you." Thus even at the end of 1824 the fruits of Castlereagh's unwise policy and apparent insincerity remained. Stratford found it needful to enlighten not only Metternich but Sir Henry Wellesley, and assure them that his kinsman was acting not under parliamentary pressure but on his own convictions, by "manifesting sympathy and something more with the late liberal movements." Metternich was very soon to be convinced by the Recognition of the New World that Stratford had not erred. Henceforward he was invariably opposed to Canning, whose knowledge of Metternich's intrigues with George the Fourth and Countess Lieven for his dismissal, united a personal enmity to a political rivalry. "I believe him (Metternich) to be the greatest rogue and liar on the Continent, perhaps in the civilized world," wrote Canning to Granville.

At St. Petersburg Stratford found Alexander and Nesselrode almost in tears at the heartless conduct of Canning in breaking off from the Congress, after he had at first shown some favour towards it. They began by refusing to discuss the

\* Poole. *Life of Stratford Canning*. I. 352. and, *infra* p. 349, to avoid confusion I refer throughout this chapter to the Ambassador as 'Stratford' and the Foreign Secretary as 'Canning.'



Greek question, so Stratford re-opened that of the Czar's Ukase about the Western waters and coast of America, and obtained substantial satisfaction for England. Before leaving however he exchanged full views with Nesselrode on Greek affairs. Though no agreement was arrived at, Stratford had done much to produce harmony and allay irritation. He returned to England to be appointed Ambassador to Constantinople, where he came to be known as "the great Elchi." Indeed though England lays on him the heavy burden of the Crimean war he was one of the ablest of our diplomatists. As "the voice of England in the East" he was the only one of our ambassadors, whose influence has been great continuous and effective at Constantinople. The instructions delivered to Stratford on \* October 13th, 1825, mark a further advance in Canning's ideas. "No hope was entertained of the conference plan—of a co-operation, of which (as appeared to the British Government) those who undertook it had neither defined the limits or adjusted the principles, nor taken into consideration the consequences which were likely to result from its failure." Stratford is therefore to keep England isolated and separate. He is to defend the action of England in recognizing the Greeks as belligerents on the ground that "the character of belligerency is not so much a principle as a fact—a certain degree of force and consistency acquired by any mass of population engaged in war, entitled that population to be treated as a belligerent." He also indignantly repelled the assumption that "in a quarrel between a sovereign and a portion of his subjects, all foreign Governments are bound by an over-ruling obligation to make common cause with the sovereign." He warns the Turk against insulting too grossly the moral opinion of the world, and mindful of his own special creation, says "the Porte cannot doubt that all the inhabitants of both Americas to a man, are in their hearts favourers of the Greek cause, and might at no distant period become active co-operators in it. This is not the language of intimidation, it is that of truth." He adds that England will endeavour to dissuade Russia or any Power from making war. The pacification of Greece is recommended to the Divan, which is informed that "to suppose Greece can ever be brought back to what she was in relation to the Porte is vain." He adds that England is willing to find out to what terms the Greeks would consent. Canning seems at this moment to have advocated a qualified

\* Turkey F.O. 133.

independence, which included an amnesty of the most liberal and generous kind and a larger measure of local autonomy. The Four Powers had just solemnly presented the demands of their Conference to the Porte. It had rejected them with scorn and contempt, whilst the Greeks feared the Holy Allies as much as the Turks. That they now looked to England alone for sympathy and aid is shown by their Official Gazette (September 30th, 1825). "We always had and still have anxious hopes that Great Britain will protect and perhaps already is protecting our rights, not by means of her arms but by means of her strong influence and her upright, wise, and liberal policy."

The sole object of Metternich at these conferences had been to gain time, to check Russia, to divide, weaken, and restrain the Greeks, and thus enable the Turkish Government to restore its authority and uphold the principles of Legitimacy. "The facility—almost dupery—of Alexander" was common talk during Metternich's visit to Paris early in 1825. It at length reached Alexander himself, who in August announced that Russia would act independently, and yet regarding himself as the sword of the Holy Alliance, "in a spirit of gloomy abstraction resolved upon immediate war." During an ominous journey of his to the Black Sea the world waited every day for a declaration of war, but was even more startled to learn that it was averted and that the Czar was dead. Harassed in Russia by conspiracies and intrigues, foiled alike by Metternich and Canning, the wearied and overworn Alexander must have welcomed death as a release from his sorrows. Canning at once read the changed produced in the European situation, as clearly as he analysed the character of this brilliant sentimentalist. "One element of discord," wrote he\* on January 9th, 1826, "is removed by the removal of the principle of the Holy Alliance from the question of intervention. Alexander's reasoning and, what was more effective, his feeling was "Why not trust me to settle Greece, as I trusted you, Austria, with Naples, and you, France, with Spain?" This feeling, however disguised, or (when it was intended to cajole *us*) suppressed, was at the bottom of all Alexander's complaints and remonstrances, and I am persuaded that though there were moments of enthusiasm, and paroxysms of ambition, the fixed purpose of his mind was not so much to liberate Greece, as to do that

\* Poole. *Life, Stratford Canning*. I. 394.



work as the blessed instrument of the Holy Alliance." The policy of the new ruler, Canning saw, would be Russian rather than cosmopolitan, and hence could be used as an instrument to break up the moral union and the Holy Alliance. The whole tenor of his policy was therefore, as we have seen, to keep England absolutely isolated and independent. Yet in December, 1825, he learnt that Lord Strangford had been recommending to Nesselrode a *collective* menace of all the powers to Turkey. This was more than he could endure. He wrote Lord\* Strangford the severest of despatches reproaching him with having done the utmost mischief and "having cut the ground from under Mr Stratford Canning's feet" by going directly against the policy of his Government. He concluded with what he called a "padlock." "The instructions which I have now to give your Excellency are comprised in a few short words, *to be quiet.*" The new policy was one of vigour, boldness, and resolution, and the inability of the old school of diplomatists—Henry Wellesley, Londonderry, Strangford, Sir Charles Stuart, and Wellington—to understand or to execute it marks the real and vital difference between Canning and Castlereagh.

Meanwhile time and events had again worked a change in the situation of Greece. Ibrahim, the Egyptian Commander, had vanquished the Greeks and overrun the Morea and the mainland with his wild Arabs and Soudanese. The balance of cruelty had hitherto weighed but slightly against the Greeks. Against the massacre of Chios could be set the cold-blooded butchery of Tripolitza, though the numbers there slaughtered were immensely less. If to the Seraglio-gate at Constantinople were nailed hundreds of pairs of human ears, Omar Vriane during his advance into Greece had marched between rows of gibbets or crosses, on which hung or writhed terribly mutilated Turkish bodies. But Ibrahim and his men contrived to improve even upon these methods, and the war in the Morea assumed† "a character of barbarism and barbarization." "The selling into slavery, the forced conversions—the dispeopling of Christendom—the recruiting from the countries of Islamism—the erection, in short, of a new puiss-

\* Now Ambassador at St. Petersburg. Gentz wrote in baffled fury III. 70. "Des phrases telles que" la voix reunie des cinq cours alliées ne s'étaient pas rencontrés depuis longtemps dans le dictionnaire diplomatique de M. Canning.

† 9th January, 1826. George Canning to Stratford. Poole I, 395.

ance Barbaresque in Europe," constituted higher grounds of interference than any which Canning had previously urged. Stratford declared the plan of Ibrahim to be "to drive as it were the whole Greek population to the Morea, to transport them into slavery in Africa, and to repeople the country so depopulated with a Mahomedan population." This monstrous and extravagant plan of warfare Canning held Christian nations and the public opinion of England could not tolerate, even if it did not prove an enormous moral incentive to Russia to act alone. There is evidence that, had Canning known definitely beforehand of the project of the Turks to seek aid from Egypt, he would have interposed with the British fleet. At any rate he now resolved to act with vigour, and on February 8th, 1826, the Lords of the Admiralty were directed to send an officer to Ibrahim, to demand an explicit disavowal or a formal renunciation of this project. This was immediately obtained, Ibrahim absolutely denying the truth of the rumour. On the 19th April, the Greek States General formally solicited the good offices of England, who was henceforth not only the sole but the authorised pleader of Greece.

The despatch of an extraordinary ambassador, to congratulate the Czar Nicholas on his accession, was Canning's opportunity to reopen negotiations with Russia. Wellington was selected, and received the\* following instructions. Russia was weary of Metternich's delusive and worn-out policy, and to suspend an appeal to arms Wellington was to offer England's *single* intervention, between Russia and the Porte on the one hand, and the Porte and the Greeks on the other. He was to discourage all idea of the renewal of the Conferences, which only Prussia now advocated. "Nothing can exceed the soreness of other Powers, of the Netherlands in particular, at the association of Prussia in an alliance, assuming the general direction of Europe, more especially since a question between Prussia and the Netherlands was decided at Verona against the latter, the Netherlands not being summoned to state their case, and Prussia sitting as a judge in a cause in which she was a party." To multiply conditions was, in Canning's view, the best way to avoid the "fruitless and perplexing process of a conference." Besides the conditions already stated to Stratford, the establishment

\* February 10th, 1826. Russia F.O., 153. The substance of the Greek overture, though not presented till April 19th, had been secretly communicated by Stratford in time to influence these instructions.



of the Russian mission and abjuration of force, Canning now insisted on the abjuration by all Powers of views of aggrandizement or special advantage, the admission of the King of the Netherlands to the Congress, and London as the seat of the Conference. Even then he thought it utterly hopeless that a congress could settle terms. Every effort must however be made, to check Russia from going to war or acting alone, and to force Ibrahim to renounce his inhuman projects. On April 4th, Wellington signed a secret Protocol with Nesselrode, which secured that England should mediate on the lines laid down in the Instruction. Greece was to remain tributary to the Sultan, but to be granted complete self-government and power to regulate its own trade. The Turkish population was to be transported from Greece "bag and baggage." The barbarities of Ibrahim and the direct appeals of the Greeks to Canning were the chief causes which had induced him thus to take his first step towards securing the independence of Greece.

So far Wellington had performed his task well. But his extraordinary neglect of the lesser arts of statesmanship and lack of diplomatic insight or subtlety was seen in his subsequent actions. He was completely deceived by the pacific professions of the Czar, and wrote to Stratford telling him to deliver an enclosed letter to the Reis Effendi (or Turkish Foreign Secretary). This "lecture" briefly informed the Reis that as Turkey had nothing to fear from Russia in the way of war, it would therefore see the propriety of yielding to England's intervention. This statement was not true—for the Czar still meditated war, but even if it had been, this hasty and unauthorized British communication from St. Petersburg would have been extraordinarily undiplomatic, and encouraged the Turks to resist our demands. Stratford very properly withheld most of the lecture, as he called it, and his decision was confirmed by Canning. The single-handed intervention of England was pressed upon the Porte with vigour by Stratford, but it had been definitely rejected before May, 1826, when the news of the Protocol came. This was partly owing to the selfish and interested intrigues of Metternich, who left no device untried to bring about its failure, and to discredit England in the eyes of the Porte. But Metternich was thunderstruck to receive intelligence of the Protocol of April 4th. At the very moment that he hoped that his \* mean and

\* That these epithets are on the side of moderation can be gathered from Poole, I, 410-16. Canning's letter quoted below is on p. 431.

shameful intrigues had defeated Canning, he discovered that Russia was pledged to a joint mediation with England. Russia was indeed bound to England and prevented from aggrandizement, but at the same time all hope of the triumph of Legitimacy was over. Metternich thought the advantage of thus hampering Russia considerable and yielded a fulsome but in reality most reluctant assent to the Protocol. After receiving it Canning wrote jubilantly to Stratford, September 5th, 1826, "Every engine short of war (which no Minister of England in his senses would dream of incurring in these times out of reverence to Aristides or St. Paul) is to be applied to beat down Turkish obstinacy. . . . You have no reason to dread being shackled in your march by the Holy Alliance. They no longer march en corps. I have resolved them into individuality and having done so, I employ the *disjecta membra* each in its respective place and for its respective use without scruple or hesitation. There were two problems to be solved in this matter—one to give to you the assistance of all the Allies without restraining your freedom of action: the other to obtain all the advantages of a *corporate* movement upon the Porte, without admitting in principle to the Allies a corporate authority or risking any disparagement in the eyes of the Porte from a possible partial defection. I flatter myself both these problems are solved. . . . As to Austria in particular, how I envy you the pleasure of reading to the worthy Internuncio . . . the respectful and laudatory citation of the sentiments of his Court, touching the recognition of the revolted provinces! Vivent les conférences which produce such doctrines—at which the real feelings of Austrian diplomacy are elicited by discussion among friends! . . . You see I am obliged to prune his Highness' extravagances, and to remind him that we cannot recognize so briskly and unconditionally as he is disposed to recommend. No, no, we go soberly and gradually and discreetly to work—no German alacrity, no Austrian precipitancy for us!" Certainly Canning must have felt delicious pleasure in thus causing Metternich to swallow with smiling face his unpalatable black draught.

During September, 1826, Canning was in Paris, where he so completely won over Charles the Tenth to his cause that the French King promised to send a French squadron, to co-operate if need be, and to place a British Admiral in command! Canning had hoped to avoid the use of force and of severe threats to the Porte, but he gradually began to



recognize that the Turks only understood violence. The Greeks fared worse and worse at the hands of Ibrahim, and Canning was at length convinced by the remonstrances of Stratford that a rapid and forcible intervention alone could save their cause. It was contrary indeed to his principles of neutrality, but they at length gave way before his humanity. He resolved to accept the offer of King Charles, but the coyness of France, the domestic complications of March and April and Canning's own miserable health caused delay. On\* July 6th, 1827, England, France and Russia solemnly signed a Treaty pledging themselves to carry out the Protocol of April 24th 1826. The terms included the merely nominal subjection of Greece to the suzerainty of the Porte, the "bag and baggage" expulsion of Turks, and a solemn disclaimer by the three Powers of all intentions of seeking exclusive commercial privileges or political aggrandizement. Canning had played his part with extraordinary skill. France lately so hostile, with that generous policy which has so often distinguished her, allied herself whole-heartedly with England. Austria and Prussia were humiliated and ineffectual, Russia was tied fast and prevented from any ambitious project. The great objects of Canning had been to prevent Russia from separate action or from declaring war, and to end the barbarities of the struggle and the useless sufferings of the Greeks. This he had now effected by assuring the freedom of Greece, which was to "receive security and repose through the medium of a qualified political existence." No mistake can be greater than to imagine that Canning risked a general dismemberment of Turkey. In reality he preserved the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, for by assuring to the Greeks practical independence he stripped Russia of all possible pretexts for aggression or war. But the treaty of July differed from the Protocol, in that more rigorous measures were proposed for compelling the attention of the Porte. An armistice was to be proclaimed, both belligerents were to cease fighting, and no further reinforcements were to be sent into Greece, which was to be

\* Canning was now Prime Minister and Lord Dudley Foreign Secretary, but the Treaty was negotiated almost wholly by the former, whose influence remained paramount. Canning's letter to Stratford (Turkey, F.O. 151, Feb. 19, 1827) shows the main ideas of the Treaty. v. also Wellin. Civ. Desp. VII. p. 120. Even before this Canning had declared he would call Greece into existence, and accredit consuls to her. Stapleton E. J. *Correspce.* II. 243.

evacuated by the Turks. Interference "not designed to be hostile" was to enforce these demands on the Porte, by a friendly demonstration of force. Orders were sent to the Mediterranean squadrons of the three Powers to combine and act under Admiral Codrington for this purpose. The Greeks were almost in the death-agony. Heavy reinforcements were just arriving from Egypt, and a naval expedition from Navarino was preparing to attack Hydra, which, if it had sailed, would probably have ended the Greek revolution at a blow. The Greeks accepted but the Turks refused the armistice, and after several abortive negotiations Ibrahim contemptuously retired into the interior of Morea, which he proceeded to devastate and burn. The only resource left to the Allied Fleet was a demonstration in force at Navarino. This bay was already memorable for a great Spartan disaster in the Peloponnesian War, but few Greeks could have dreamed of the new glory so soon coming to it. On October 20th the Allied squadrons, led by the fiery Codrington, entered the harbour, and a dispute between boats' crews brought on a general battle. The Turkish and Egyptian fleets were dashed in pieces, shattered wrecks and floating bodies strewed the now twice-famous bay, and the thunder of Codrington's guns proclaimed the Freedom of Greece.

Before the great work for which he had laboured was accomplished, Canning had sunk beneath the burden of disease and care. Some have held that Canning himself never thought of the application of armed force, because of the diplomatically smooth phrases of the treaty. Nothing can be more untrue, for he distinctly contemplated the use of armed force, to "prevent, in so far as might be in their power, all collision between the contending parties." The prevention was to be enforced by cutting off from the Turks all supplies and reinforcements. Stratford's\* instructions to Codrington September, 1st 1827, were:—"On the subject of collision. . . Though it is the intention of the Allied Governments to avoid, *if possible, anything that may bring on war*, yet the prevention of supplies . . . is ultimately to be enforced, if necessary, and when all other means are exhausted, by cannon-shot." This was in fact the real difference between the Protocol and the Treaty. The former Wellington accepted, to the latter he was bitterly opposed. He declared

\* Poole, Life I. 449. It is a fable that the Duke of Clarence, then Lord High Admiral, sent instructions to Codrington, as follows; "Go it, Ned!"



that Canning had negotiated it without the knowledge of anyone but his ducal self. He complained that the Treaty went much further than the Protocol, because it \* "specified measures of compulsion neither more nor less than actual measures of war." After this no possible doubt can remain. Canning hoped to accomplish his object by menace, but he never used "that engine" unless he "intended to execute it," and cannon-shot would have made clear the reality of his threats. Also it was proved that with favourable circumstances menace alone would have been sufficient, for in September Codrington nearly accomplished his task without bloodshed. He caught the Turkish squadron with Ibrahim on board sailing towards Patras. Had the French and Russian squadrons been present he could have forced Ibrahim to return to Egypt. As it was his ships were too few and he could only turn Ibrahim back to Navarino by threatening to sink his fleet. Even though this occurred after Canning's death the ministry do not seem to have censured the proceeding. Canning's policy was exactly similar to his action in Portugal in December, 1826. He had then sent troops who attacked and defeated Spanish soldiers. He was well aware of the possible sequel to the action, but this prompt measure averted war with Spain. So even now he would, in the last resort (and this is no paradox) use cannon-shot to avoid war.

But apart altogether from this question, which really admits of no doubt, it is legitimate to ask what Canning's action would have been subsequent to Navarino? The mischief once done, instant and effective action was needful. Canning was famed for his swift decision at moments of crisis, as Lisbon and Copenhagen testified. The war with Russia he had averted from Turkey was now almost inevitable, but for some bold stroke on the part of England. Stratford, whose thoughts were usually those of Canning, recommended the immediate despatch of the fleet to the Dardanelles. Guns have always been the best diplomats foreign powers could send to the Porte, and we may suppose that Canning would have taken this course. He would certainly have shrunk from no risk or action which would have kept Russia at peace. Anything more weak and ineffective than the policy actually pursued can hardly be imagined. We tendered apologies, withdrew our fleet, and described Navarino as an "untoward

\* Well. Civ. Desp. N.S. IV. 137, 221.

event." The language used by Wellington, in the Lords, \* January 30, 1828, seemed a deliberate encouragement to the Turks to depend upon us and to defy Russia. The result was that the Czar declared war and reaped private and special gains from his separate action. Meanwhile France had the glory of freeing the Morea from Ibrahim by landing a military force. Wellington had declared the intention of England to preserve Turkey as an *intact* and powerful State, and yet he eventually consented to the avowed independence of Greece and to a much larger extension of territory than Canning himself had designed! We surrendered in fact every principle to which Wellington himself had clung, losing at the same time every advantage gained by Canning's plan of concerted action, so that we became merely impotent and contemptible. The truth is Canning, deeply sympathising with the Greeks yet resolved to check Russia, had hurried and forced his colleagues into the Treaty against their will. Goderich, his successor in the Premiership, was feeble and vacillating, Wellington and Aberdeen had never pretended to approve this later policy. The result was the utter decline of British influence at Constantinople and a vast increase in that of Russia, whilst the Greeks bitterly complained that they had been betrayed, and mourned the memory of their departed champion.

The only criticism of Canning's action in the East which could be made is that he was if anything too unwilling to intervene. This reluctance is partly explained by the bitter opposition of his colleagues, partly by his steadfast adherence to his principle of non-interference. He had always seen that the Greek rising against Turkey was totally different from the Liberal movements of South Europe, but he wished if possible to treat Turkey as a civilised State, till time showed she was not amenable to the ordinary methods of diplomacy. Till then, though he showed an open and candid sympathy with the Greek cause, he yet preserved a complete neutrality of action. Had he not prevented the Congress it is almost certain Metternich would have protracted it till the Greeks were subdued. The means by which Canning split up the Holy Alliance and yet brought France to his aid show the highest diplomatic skill, and the freedom of Greece is the monument and the trophy of his fame. The Porte always

\* Wellington was now Premier and his utterance was more unfortunate, as the withdrawal of our ambassador from Constantinople left no means of explaining it—to the Porte.



maintained "the two Cannings" to be the source and main-spring of Greek liberty. Canning was the first to dream of setting up a State in theory dependent upon Turkey, and in fact not under the protection of Russia. His treatment of the Eastern Question remains classical, and combines the best points of the policy of Disraeli and Gladstone. Resolved to prevent the aggrandizement of Russia he acted in concert with her,—a policy as daring yet wiser and more practical than Disraeli's policy of opposition. Determined if possible to maintain the Ottoman Empire he was yet resolved to secure good government to its subjects, as he showed by granting \* independence in all but name to the Greeks. He did not content himself with vague and thunderous denunciation, but by his adroit measures enforced that respect and concession which the Porte never denies to an *effective* union of armed powers. His treatment of Greece foreshadows alike the local autonomy and the complete independence, which the Powers have from time to time seen fit to grant to the revolted provinces of Turkey. The principles of his policy are as true and clear and valuable to-day as when they were formulated, however his immediate or later successors have forgotten or abandoned them. In philosophy research usually ends with the cry "Back to Aristotle," and there will be a beginning to our Eastern policy when our statesman shall exclaim "Back to Canning!"

\* Had he lived a few years longer he would probably have recognized a complete independence. Political followed commercial recognition in the New World in eighteen months.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE STRUGGLE FOR THE PREMIERSHIP AND THE END (February to August 18th, 1827.)

THE history of Canning's premiership is rather that of the formation of a cabinet than of the work of a ministry. A review of the events leading up to it will explain the position. On January 5th, 1827, died the Duke of York, after Eldon the most steadfast of Anti-Catholic leaders. As the Cabinet ministers waited two hours in St. George's Chapel for the funeral Canning, with his usual thought for others, induced Eldon to stand on his hat to avoid the cold of the flagstones. This incident induced \*Tom Moore to write one of his admirable witticisms. But in truth the banter was tragic in its way, for it was literally true. The great opponent of Emancipation escaped harm, its great champion caught a chill from which he never recovered. Canning was so ill from the end of January onwards that he could do little or no business, and only rose from his sick-bed on March 8th, to make one of the most brilliant of all his speeches (unhappily not well reported) in favour of Catholic Emancipation. Unfortunately the motion failed by four votes to pass the Commons, and for the session the Emancipators resigned their hopes. On March 6th a yet more important bill passed the Commons, that on Corn-importation. At this time the corn laws placed an extraordinarily high duty against foreign wheat, with the view of encouraging home agriculture.

\* You too, ye Britons, had this hope  
Of Church and State been vanished from ye.  
Just think how Canning and the Pope  
Would then have played up Hell and Tommy.  
At sea there's but a plank, they say,  
'Twixt sailors and annihilation.  
A hat that awful moment lay  
'Twixt Ireland and Emancipation.



The terrible distress of 1825-6, the depression of trade, and the very bad harvest necessitated measures of relief which Liverpool, Canning and Huskisson arranged. The foreign corn bonded in warehouses, waiting till prices should rise to the level at which importation was allowed, was at once released, and the Government also imported 500,000 quarters more with the view of reducing the distress. As the high duty was nothing more nor less than an immense grant to the landlords, it can hardly be wondered that the great body of the "booby squires" and "Tory High Fliers," as Creevey called them, objected and furiously denounced Huskisson and Canning. These two, however, were undaunted, and, though both were very ill, arranged a joint-measure known as the Corn Law Relief Bill, which they introduced into the Commons on March 6th, 1827. Canning had with his usual ability perceived the tendency of the time. "We are on the brink," \* said he, "of a great struggle between property and population, such a struggle is only to be averted by the mildest and most liberal legislation." He saw perfectly well that the manufacturing classes and the people were impatient of these doles to the landlords, that to persist in them might prove a national danger. He designed as usual a policy of moderation, of holding the balance between the land and the factory. How wise and far-sighted was his policy was shown later on, when in 1846 the landlords, who had so obstinately tried to maintain their monopoly, were utterly overthrown by the industrial and manufacturing interests. Timely concession on the lines laid down by Canning would at least have abated the distress of the people and certainly lessened the violence of the change.

Such then was the situation—the Ultras and landlords were vehemently opposed to Canning because of his views on corn and Catholics, as well as because of his liberal foreign policy. On February 17th, Liverpool was seized with a fit, became insensible, and never recovered the use of his faculties. This was a terrible blow to Canning, whom the premier had greatly admired and heartily supported. Flattery cannot describe Liverpool as a great statesman or as a great man,

\* Stapleton, E.J. Correspondence II. 321.

† Yonge has tried at great length to prove Liverpool's extensive influence on foreign policy. It is a failure however. One of his two great instances is—a cabinet memorandum on the colonies which he ascribes

but he united business ability and unrivalled official experience to infinite tact and good humour. Whilst Castlereagh was at the Foreign Office he had largely succumbed to his influence, afterwards he had submitted himself as readily to Canning. He had soothed and calmed the irritable temper of his great colleague, whenever maddened by the opposition of Wellington or the sloth of Eldon he had offered his resignation. He had been an Anti-catholic yet a Liberal in foreign policy and the Corn Laws, and so formed an isthmus between the Ultras and the Moderates. The great question was now—who would be his successor? “I think somehow,” wrote Mr. Creevey with extraordinary prophetic insight on February 19th, “that it must be Canning and that he’ll die of it.” The great avowed obstacle was the question of Roman Catholic Emancipation. The principle, by which members of the Government had agreed to vote independently on this question and not to treat it as a Cabinet measure, was one of exceedingly dubious constitutional law. On the most vital and imminent of questions the Government had no policy, but was constructed on a principle of counteraction. This original arrangement of 1812 Canning had opposed, but had joined the ministry in 1816 on the understanding that Anti-catholic views should not preclude any individual from any office. There seems little doubt that Liverpool, who was always talking of resigning, contemplated Canning as his successor, there is none whatever that the latter viewed the premiership as a natural reversion. In point of fact there were only four serious competitors—Canning, Peel, Wellington, or some insignificant peer under whom all would agree to act. So far as genius and ability went no one could contest the palm with Canning. Peel was indeed a man of great talents, but much junior to his rival and confessedly his inferior. The real contest was between Wellington and Canning. Of the great Duke’s political abilities it is enough to say that he thought George the Third an ideal king and Castlereagh an ideal statesman. But if short-sighted and a Tory of Tories by nature, and not a great politician, he

to Liverpool. But we know from Stapleton that this was written by Canning, Liverpool’s copy no doubt, having his name written on it, which may have misled his biographer. Yonge also thinks that by letters to Canning in 1825 Liverpool first advocated the despatch of troops to Portugal. Canning had already decided to do this in the case of aggression from Spain or France in 1823! v. F.O. France. 284. Spain. 268, *passim*.



was at least a great man. His grand honesty of purpose, his utter lack of ostentation and hatred of display, his love of truth and simplicity erected even his obstinacy and bigotry into virtues. If in the unhappy misunderstandings which now arose the evidence were equally balanced the decision would go against Canning or any other man, for in a sincere and honest desire to serve the public in any position, however humble, and always without thought of self, no one ever equalled Wellington. But happily for Canning's fame it is possible to show that Wellington was deceived and irritated by various circumstances, and acted throughout under misapprehension.

The only time Wellington ever met Nelson he described him as at first talking like a charlatan and vain-glorious boaster but eventually condescending to sense. Of course the truth probably was that Nelson spoke in his usual passionate strains of England and his own patriotism, but perceiving Wellington's coldness proceeded to give him naval details and facts which at once appealed to that concrete intellect. In the same way Wellington could see nothing in Sir Sidney Smith, who, though somewhat flashy and boastful, was a most able and brilliant officer, as he showed in his repulse of Napoleon at Acre and in his blockade of the Tagus. There is then little cause to wonder that Wellington pronounced Canning, with his eloquence and poetic imagination, to be a charlatan. He was enraged that Castlereagh should have died unregretted while Canning had become so popular. Moreover, though never obtrusive with advice, he was always most angry if it was not taken when offered. Canning was doubtless not tactful, frequently consulting with him but seldom or never adopting his views. In foreign policy Wellington had most bitterly opposed Canning's later developments. He had threatened to resign over the recognition of the New World, he had tried to prevent the expedition to Portugal, he had strenuously opposed the turning of his Russian Protocol into an arrangement eventually to be enforced at the cannon's mouth. He deeply suspected Canning of hunting for popularity by conciliating the Whigs. Being the friend of the landlords he disliked the Corn-Relief Bill, whilst he thought Catholic Emancipation would overturn the throne in 1827, though in 1829 he suddenly discovered it would be its strongest support. Here then were grounds enough for difference and quarrel. Wellington seems to have lost all reason and patience, and

some of his recorded remarks are the grossest misrepresentations. At one time he said that Canning had merely copied Castlereagh's policy, at another that he had utterly departed from those principles. But his worst calumny was when he declared that Canning was a very idle man, an accusation which is against every known fact and evidence which no one can believe and which not even Canning's worst enemies had hitherto ever made. When so sincere a truth-lover as Wellington could make such ludicrous mis-statements one can only conclude him blinded by prejudice or passion.

After an interval to see if Lord Liverpool would recover Wellington had an audience of the king in the first week of March. What passed is not known, but he must have expressed himself strongly against appointing a Catholic premier, for on November 20th, 1826,\* he had actually thought of sending a memorandum to the king requesting him to put pressure on Canning because of his advocacy of emancipation. It is probable that during this time the intrigues of the Ultras to exclude Canning began. The Duke of Newcastle, the leader of the landed interest, used his privilege as peer to secure an audience with the king, violently protested against Canning, and threatened to withdraw the support of himself and his rotten boroughs from the Government. The Dukes of Rutland and Buckingham protested in language equally firm though not so indecent. The king, though as late as 1797 an Emancipator, had become a firm Anti-Catholic, but he was now as attached to his Foreign Secretary as to his prerogative and deeply resented this haughty dictation, which indeed violated the whole spirit of the compromise of 1812. On March 22nd he consulted Canning, who seems to have acted with perfect openness. As the king was opposed to Emancipation Canning therefore advised him to form an exclusively Anti-Catholic ministry. If he himself was to remain he would not serve under an Anti-Catholic premier, as he thought that infringed the neutrality of the compromise. He would however serve under a dummy Catholic premier, and suggested Robinson becoming a peer for that purpose. Personally he desired to remain Foreign Secretary, but the "substantive power of the prime minister he must have and be known to have." There was no modesty here, but there was no decep-

\* III. 603. Well. Desp. N.S. v. for proposed memorandum. III. 462. During most of April Wellington's letters *have not been published*. They might clear up some obscurities.



tion. Canning was really anxious about his foreign policy. He believed he could only last three or four years longer, and wished to secure it against attack. Liverpool had supported him, but no other Anti-Catholic premier was likely to do so. Wellington and Eldon usurped all the patronage of the Church and the Army, and as distribution of places was then a great influence in government, it was but fair that Canning or one of his supporters should have the patronage of the Treasury and the influence of the Premier to strengthen him in the Cabinet. The king at first suggested the Cabinet should choose their own chief, but this proposal was afterwards withdrawn. Between March 27th and April 6th Canning did not see the King, but Wellington and Peel were in frequent consultation with him. The king was determined not to let Canning go, and the Ultras were resolved to exclude him. Peel's position was throughout fair and honourable, that of irreconcilable hostility to anything Catholic. That of the Ultras was disingenuous, they desired for personal reasons to exclude Canning, because of his liberalism in corn and foreign policy, and because of his personal ascendancy. But everything was covered by their scruples about Emancipation, and Wellington quite unconsciously in effect became their tool. He certainly did not covet the premiership himself for personal ends, but he wished to prevent Emancipation and check liberalism, and consented to be put forward. On April 9th Peel, forgetful of his usual tact, brought forward a name he thought would 'remove all difficulties,' that of the Duke of Wellington. To this Canning refused to consent, and indeed it would have been absurd to expect him to serve under the man who opposed every point of his domestic and foreign policy. But as he could hardly offer these grounds he was obliged to make the somewhat pedantic excuse that this would be uniting the supreme civil and military functions in one person. This was decisive, Canning saw the king again on the 10th April, who expressed his indignation at his treatment by the Ultras, and gave him his hand to kiss. Canning knelt and rose up Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury, and Chancellor of the Exchequer.

When this was announced half a dozen of his colleagues resigned. They all alleged that they resigned without concert for personal reasons, but this excuse in fact can only be extended to Wellington. Eldon was an irreconcilable opponent to Emancipation, made of *pig*-iron said Tom Moore, but was perhaps old enough to have some excuse. Peel's departure

was expected, because the Home Secretary if Anti-Catholic could hardly agree with a Catholic Premier. But there was no such excuse for the *sôt privé* and the rest. Westmoreland, Bathurst and Melville retired, the two former being enraged at the failure of the intrigues to exclude Canning, the latter giving the canny Scotch reason that he did not think the government could last. That Canning meant to maintain a balanced and even opinion on the Catholic Question is clear, as Lord Bexley, who at first retired, withdrew his resignation because convinced of this fact. Wellington declared Canning's letter, asking him to take part in the Government, was \* unfriendly and stiff and evinced no desire that he should join. He replied by asking who was to be the head of the Government. Historical precedents may have justified the Duke in this request, but, after five weeks' suspense and Canning's known decision, it could hardly be expected he would be the scribe for someone else who was to be the real head. Canning replied very shortly and curtly to the effect that he thought it generally known that the man empowered to form a government also headed it. Wellington † said the letter contained "terms of taunt and rebuke," took it as a personal insult and not only resigned his seat in the Cabinet but his command of the Army. The latter was a fatal mistake, which even his admirers do not defend, for he thus introduced political bickerings and partisan resentments into the military service. But at the same time Canning's letter was an equal error, for it enabled Wellington to plead a personal cause for retirement, whilst he would have had some difficulty in resigning on the avowed political ground of Emancipation. Both men lost their tempers and in an angry correspondence that ensued they were at cross-purposes, referring to different interviews and misunderstanding one another. The truth in brief is this—Wellington thought Canning had been intriguing with the Whigs to exclude him and his friends, and Canning, who knew of the Ultra intrigues against him, thought Wellington their avowed, whereas he was only their unconscious, leader.

Canning was left with Bexley, Huskisson, Sturges—Bourne,

\* This was partly due to the formal and official character of the note which was shown to the king.

† What added greatly to the sting was the knowledge that it had been shown to the king, whom Wellington heartily despised. The letter is undoubtedly blunt, but hardly justifies Wellington's intense personal resentment. Greville—ap. Jan. 4th, 1881—is most instructive on this crisis.



Palmerston, Dudley and Portland to form a Cabinet. He therefore sought a coalition with the moderate Whigs. The Opposition had long been viewing his conduct of our foreign policy with intense admiration. As early as March, 1824, Colonel Berquer\* wrote to Sir Robert Wilson: 'The contrast of his administration with that of his suicide predecessor is the golden age coming on the heels of the iron.' On\* November 1st, 1824, even so great a democrat as Erskine wrote "Canning did himself great honour. . . I begin to entertain a good opinion of him. . . and if he should persevere in the same manly and liberal course of conduct he will become very popular." It only needed the expedition to Portugal to complete the Whig transports and their famous club at Brooks rang with his praises. Canning had always been on friendly terms with some of them, and on 26th March he interviewed Wilson and Brougham as individuals. The accusation that Canning intrigued with the Whigs as a body before April 10th is untrue, and directly refuted by Sir Robert Wilson himself. That gallant officer was now the chief agent between Canning and the Whigs, and to his tact and skill may be ascribed the success of the negotiation.† Brougham, the ambitious and treacherous, was carefully soothed and flattered into acquiescence. But the great Whig chiefs Lansdowne and Tierney were the two whose influence decided the party, at a meeting at Lansdowne House, to join Canning. The Opposition had been singularly disinterested during the last few years, and it was no less so in the terms it now made. Canning would not yield a single one of his principles, the Government was pledged to oppose Reform and the Repeal of the test Acts. The Catholic question remained open whilst it was agreed that, so far as possible, Irish administrative appointments should be assigned without reference to opinion. Lansdowne tried to insist on the lead in the Lords, but this Canning would not grant and raised Robinson to the peerage with the title of Viscount Goderich for that purpose. Eventually a compromise was arranged, Tierney became Master of the Mint whilst the Duke of Clarence, who had Whig leanings, was appointed Lord High Admiral. Plunket, the great Catholic champion, was given a peerage. Among admirable appointments, in which

\* Ad. MSS 30, III.

† His inability to abandon his practice at the Bar precluded his admission to the ministry, but he was granted a patent of precedence. It is characteristic that at the moment he was writing to Lansdowne of Canning in the warmest terms, he was expressing suspicions of him to Grey!

Canning's hand is discerned, were those of Copley (Lyndhurst) to be Lord Chancellor of England, Anglesea to be Irish Viceroy, whilst the incompetent Lord Manners made way for the capable Sir Anthony Hart in the Chancellorship of Ireland. Outside the walls of parliament the new ministry was hailed with wild enthusiasm. The press and the people both were in transports because of Canning's victory over those, whom they genially termed 'his late bigoted and despised colleagues.' For once the choice of the crown was the choice of the people. Ireland hailed with delight the triumph of one who had always been her friend, and the French newspapers went into raptures over the elevation of the man whom they termed "The minister of Representative Europe."

As far as Canning was concerned, no principle had been abandoned and the coalition was of the most honourable kind. But dissensions within a party always excite the bitterest passions. Many ejected placemen now became "patriots bursting with heroic rage." The nominees of Newcastle, Westmoreland, and Buckingham, Tadpoles and Tapers, displaced party hacks and intriguers of all kinds, unctuously denounced this "new and most base coalition." No discreditable party-device was left untried, no insinuation was too odious, and every mean and low motive was ascribed to the premier. That Canning felt this deeply cannot be denied, but the old wit and humour was still his stay and support. On May 4th, just after a motion had been proposed, Dawson most improperly interrupted the debate and asked whether any arrangement had been made for filling up the offices of Master of the Mint, Judge Advocate, and Surveyor of Woods and Forests. "The answer was the monosyllable \* 'yes,' but pronounced in such a tone of mingled scorn, anger, and grief that it seemed as if the heart of him, who uttered it were breaking with vexation and disappointment." Dawson then moved for copies of the patents of appointment, but Canning replied "I know not how this can have the effect of satisfying his *anxiety*, unless it be according to the old Cambridge problem that the masts and the guns of the ship being given, and dividing by the men you get at the name of the captain." For parallels to the virulence with which Canning was assailed we must recall Pulteney hounding on his followers against Walpole, or think of the day when Melville's impeachment was carried and Sir Thomas Mostyn

\* Earl Russell *Recollections and Suggestions*, p. 57. He adds "I remember nothing like it but Kean's answer to Iago, 'You are moved,' he replies 'not a jot,' in a voice of the deepest anxiety and emotion."



gave a view-halloa and shouted "We have killed the fox." In the Commons Peel and the other leaders loftily abstained from these recriminations, which were carried on by men of comparative insignificance such as Dawson, Hugessen and Lethbridge. In general Canning met these coarse attacks with a calm temper, and a new dignity and serenity which surprised and delighted his followers. One of the noblest passages in all his orations is that in which he explained that he had advised the King to form an Anti-Catholic ministry, but that he would not himself remain in a Cabinet which sanctioned a principle of exclusion against some of its own members for opinions which they were professedly free to hold.\* "I will retire altogether and forever from public life—I will betake myself to the farthest boundary of the earth and into perpetual banishment—I will resign any and every hope of office—for I care nothing for office—but I will not consent to disgrace myself by consenting to sanction a principle, which must bring degradation as well upon myself, as upon those who would become subject to such exclusion, on account of holding these opinions."

The followers of Canning always declared that he "had been hunted to death in the Commons." They should rather have turned to the Upper House and exclaimed "Here wast thou bayed, brave hart!" There indeed stood the real hunters "signed in his spoil." After all the revilers in the Commons were but underlings, as it were the dogs driven on by the crack of the noble huntsman's whip. Those in the Lords were real leaders. Wellington, though dignified, was emphatic in stern condemnation. Londonderry declared Canning had betrayed and abandoned all the principles of Castlereagh. This if true would have deprived that statesman of his only claim to fame, which is that he prepared the path and initiated the policy which Canning adopted. Knowing how much of that initiation was due to Canning we can, however, understand Londonderry's attitude. Newcastle denounced the new premier "as the most profligate minister that ever was in power," conveniently forgetting that of his own two ancestors who had attained to the Treasury, one, after proving himself the most incompetent of all modern premiers, had consented to what was on his side a most base and ignoble coalition, whilst both had excelled their master Walpole in the base arts of political corruption. But far the most envenomed attack

\* May 1st, 1827.

was delivered by Earl Grey. Since the days of the "Anti-Jacobin" he had always detested Canning, who had made him especially ridiculous by exposing his inconsistencies. Grey was a man of high character, but proud, sensitive and ambitious, and he proved a good hater. The failure of Canning's negotiations in 1812 was due largely to Grey's personal animosity. During the negotiations of April, 1827, he held steadfastly aloof, and declared with selfish aristocratic prejudice that he regarded 'the son of an actress as *de facto* incapacitated from becoming premier of England." But personal reasons were not the only cause of his dissent, he seems genuinely to have feared that the distinctive principles of the Whig party would be effaced by the contemplated union. Canning professed the better parts of both Tory and Whig creeds, and his great popularity in the country was due to this fact that he really represented the collective national feeling better than either party. To the zealous partisan such a man was a dangerous and insidious enemy. Grey may also have heard some of the usual wild exaggerations and mis-statements made by \* the king, which may have led him to think Canning had abandoned the Catholics. Knowing George's betrayal of the Whigs as Regent and his own refusal to put any faith in him between 1810-12, it is however surprising that Grey should now have believed him. In fact George IV supported Canning manfully during the crisis but, as Grey knew, the royal actions and the royal words often had no relation to one another. On May 7th Grey delivered an oration arraigning Canning's public conduct, insinuating that he was a trickster in every point of his political career, whilst in foreign policy he was but a mere boastful impostor, trampling on national rights for the sake of commercial gains. These charges have been refuted in detail by some statements drawn up by Canning himself and published by Stapleton. It is sufficient to say that they depend for their force upon misquotation of published documents and papers, and mis-reading of all events upon which the public was not fully informed. Knowing as we do the indecent and disingenuous denunciation pronounced by Grey on the Danish expedition in 1807, when he himself as Foreign Secretary had threatened Denmark with war for much slighter causes but a few months before, it seems hard to acquit him of intentional misrepre-

\* v. some very extraordinary passages in Buckingham's *Memoirs of Courts and Cabinets of George IV* about this time. II. 346 et seqq. and Hill, 191.



sentation. His only excuse must be that he was not behind the scenes in 1827, and that feelings of pride, contempt and hatred deprived him of all fairness of judgment. Canning himself was wounded and pierced to the heart by this savage assault, and seriously deliberated whether he should take a peerage in order to answer it. All the taunts and sarcasms and invectives of the Commons had not so moved and stirred him, and his wife afterwards declared that she believed it had shortened his life.

Canning's ministry was never really proved or tried. It fell with the fall of its great chief, who alone could unite its discordant elements. Goderich quietly succeeded to the premiership, but that "transient embarrassed phantom" was incapable of firmness and resolution, Richard Cromwell as it were succeeding the Great Oliver. Before the end of the year the ministry had resigned. Yet none the less Canning's premiership had done much. It had broken that close aristocratic clique of Tories, who had so long monopolised power, as effectually as George the Third had routed the Whigs. Wellington's ministry backed by the whole landed interest only lasted three years and fell amidst universal detestation. The Whigs had learnt unity and moderation, the Tories compromise and concession beneath the standard of Canning. Above all Palmerston was converted from Toryism and thence forward the foreign policy of the Whigs, for the next thirty years, was shaped and moulded by that masterful personality.

Before the Cabinet had been fully made up the session was already at its close. On June 31st Canning introduced his first and last budget. The disturbances and trials of the past few months enabled him only to carry on the temporary expedients of the preceding years. But he announced himself a disciple of Adam Smith and Pitt, and declared he would frame his future budgets in accordance with their principles. Further he added that he trusted less to legislative enactments for improvement of trade than to the character and enterprise of merchants and manufacturers, thus avowing himself a free-trader. On June 18th and 21st he spoke on the Corn Amendment Bill, and with the exception of a few brief words these were his last speeches in the House. All the advantages of that Bill had been in effect annulled in the Lords by an amendment carried by Wellington, declaring that foreign corn should not be taken out of bond till corn had reached sixty-six shillings. The object of the Bill had been to lessen the price of bread

in England by supplying foreign corn, whenever the sale of it was remunerative according to a fixed scale. By altering this scale Wellington completely defeated the object of the Bill and assisted the English land-owners at the expense of the people. Canning was quite justified in describing this amendment as introducing not only new principles but as contrary to the whole object of the original bill. He further declared that Wellington had unconsciously allowed himself to "become an instrument in the hands of others," which was perfectly true. But all Canning could do was to say that he would bring in a new bill the next session, in which we know he designed to lower the price at which corn could be imported into England to fifty shillings per quarter. He thus designed to avert the coming struggle between the landed and industrial interests. These were his last words and legacy to the House and they were remembered by a great statesman of the future. "I never saw Canning but once," said Disraeli, "but I can recollect it but as yesterday, when I listened to almost the last accents—I may say the dying words—of that great man. I can recall the lightning flash of that eye and the tumult of that ethereal brow; still lingers in my ear the melody of that voice."

Canning was only fifty-seven, two years younger than Gladstone at the first of his four premierships. But the incredible labours and cares of uniting the foreign office with the lead in the Commons, disappointments and sorrows had worn and fretted the dauntless spirit. A doctor suddenly summoned before the Privy Council Board, asked a friend "who is that individual with such a fine eye who is so near his end?" When he heard it was Canning he was horrorstruck, for he was one of the great man's admirers. The Duke of Devonshire had offered Canning his country house at Chiswick in which he might recuperate. "Do not go there," said Lady Holland to the premier. "Why?" said he. "Oh" said she "I have a presentiment, you know Mr. Fox died there." Canning laughed gaily, but even Lady Holland could never afterwards speak of this incident without emotion. In after days Huskisson told a deeply-moved House of Commons the story of his last visit to his friend. He found Canning ill and pale and worn, yet "his enthusiasm for his country knew no bounds, and, added Huskisson, he sacrificed himself as truly in the service of his country as Nelson, to whom alone for patriotism and devotion he could be compared. To the last, in spite of terrible weakness, his thoughts were of the future of England and of Europe. During July the Treaty which should give freedom



to Greece, and the preliminaries of an agreement, by which Brazil abandoned the slave trade, were signed, both of which results flowed directly from the impulse and initiative of Canning. On July 30th he had his last audience with the king at Windsor, and a stranger who saw him driving from the Castle gates saw death in his looks. Hardly had he reached Chiswick than he fell violently ill and took to his bed, from which he never rose. The little tapestried room in which he lay was that in which Fox had died. For a week the country was hushed in suspense, royal dukes stood at his bed-side, ambassadors thronged the ante-rooms. His complaint was one of the most painful from which it is possible to suffer, an internal inflammation so terrible and so widespread that the doctors could not tell from which part of the body it had arisen. Almost his last intervals of consciousness were devoted to framing a memorandum on the subject of Portugal. Often his mind wandered and listeners caught the names of Portugal, Spain, and England from his lips. His sufferings were agonising, but at the last were suddenly abated. Poor Joan, his devoted wife, was alone with him when he began suddenly to talk with perfect consciousness. She listened for a time with delight, but observing the signs of speedy dissolution overspreading his face, fainted and was borne from the room. The end was very near and on the 8th of August he passed quietly away. On the sixteenth his body was carried to its rest in the Great Abbey, which has received and treasured so much of noble and heroic dust. Young Charles Canning—the future Viceroy—was chief mourner, and was supported by two royal princes—the heir to the throne and the Duke of Sussex. Though the funeral was private in character immense crowds thronged the streets, in whose deep and solemn silence could be read the signs of a nation's grief. The ceremony was of the simplest kind, and though all the foreign ambassadors and some of the greatest and mightiest in the land were present, all were divested of the symbols and attributes of rank or splendour. While the service was being read poor Charles Canning gave way to the most heart-rending grief, and tears were seen in the eyes of Seaford and Goderich and others of his father's earliest and most faithful friends. The coffin was lowered into a vault, which adjoined the tomb of the man whom the dead statesman had revered as a father. All the petty differences which had once disturbed their friendship had long been forgotten, and the body of Canning lies where he would most have desired

it to rest,—at the foot of the grave of Pitt. To the statesman this spot should be as sacred, as is to the poet the green pyramid of Caius Cestius at Rome where Keats and Shelley lie buried.

“In a time of profound peace the death of Canning was felt throughout the world as an omen of general danger.” So said Hookham Frere, and he was right in thinking it a world-event. “It was an event in the internal history of every country,” wrote Mackintosh, attempting the temper of the historian of future times. ‘From Lima to Athens, every nation struggling for independence or existence, was filled with sorrow and dismay. The Miguelites of Portugal, the Apostolicals of Spain, the Jesuit faction in France, and the Divan of Constantinople raised a shout of joy at the fall of their dreaded enemy.’ A medal was struck in France at the public expense which bore on one side the figure of civil and religious liberty, on the other this inscription:—*à George Canning toute la nation française.*’ But after all it was always Gentz and Metternich who contrived to praise Canning most. The former spoke of the event as “une nouvelle dont l’immense importance se fera bientôt sentir dans toutes les transactions politiques.” From the character and circumstance of the age, from the influence of his policy even more than from the dazzling qualities of his genius, it may be doubted whether the death of any English statesman ever awakened such ecstasies of joy or intensities of sorrow among the courts and peoples of Europe. One of the innumerable poems, elegies and dirges called forth by the occasion well shows the universal, as it were the international, grief. The author imagines himself traversing foreign lands in a dream:—

“From every clime a mourner came,  
Till memory could no record keep;  
All wept one loss all breathed one name;—  
My sorrow burst the bounds of sleep,  
I woke and found my dream was true,  
My country! Thou wert weeping too!”

It was to many as though the very sun had set in the sky, whilst even opponents like Grey were awed and shocked by the premature extinction of talents so great and splendid. The fame of Canning in his own land had been but the shadow of his glory abroad. Yet perhaps the most genuine and unaffected of all tributes to his memory came from England. It was from a boy who undertook a pilgrimage



from Eton to Westminster Abbey, there to mourn and pray at the tomb of his hero. That boy was William Ewart Gladstone, who, musing over that great name, which was now alas! only a memory, drew from it perhaps something of the loftiness and inspiration of his own high ideal.

## CHAPTER XIV

### CHARACTERISTICS

A PARADOXICAL modern philosopher has maintained that genius detests the peace of the fireside and tires at the long rubber of connubial life. All prominent English statesmen, from Chatham to Gladstone, stand forth to assure him either that this theory is false or that they have no genius. The case of Canning is the more remarkable, because he cannot be said to have urged his suit under the sole influence and passion of romantic love. In old days his fancy had been caught by Lady Elizabeth Spencer, as he told Lord Boringdon,—

“ My heart was scorched and burnt to tinder  
When talking to her at the winder.”

On another occasion he wrote to Mrs. Leigh—

“ And when to ease the load of life,  
Of private care and public strife,  
My lot shall give to me a wife,  
I ask not rank or riches.”

But he soon modified these sentiments, and became engaged to Miss Joan Scott, the heiress to £100,000. Frere has described the wedding which took place on July 8th, 1800.

(\*) “ I was to be best man and Pitt, Canning and Mr. Leigh (Canning’s cousin who was to read the service) dined with me. We had a coach to church and as we went down a narrow street a fellow drew up against the wall, to avoid being run over, and peering into the coach, recognized Pitt and saw Mr. Leigh, who was in full canonicals, sitting opposite to him. The fellow exclaimed, “ What, Billy Pitt, and with a parson too ! ” Frere, ever ready with his joke, said to Pitt, “ He thinks you are going to Tyburn to be hanged privately,” but the Olympian was too absorbed either to be angry or to

\* Gabrielle Festing—Hookham Frere and his Friends p. 31.



answer. So nervous was Pitt during the ceremony that he forgot to sign among the witnesses. "He regarded the marriage as the one thing needed to give Canning the position necessary to lead a party, and this was the cause of his anxiety. . . . Had Canning been Pitt's own son, I do not think that he could have been more interested in all that related to his marriage."

Canning's marriage, unlike that of his parents, had been the reverse of improvident; but if he married for money he at least rendered the most intense devotion and affection to his wife. Though graceful and attractive she was never prominent in society, by reason of her retiring modesty. She had already given half her fortune to her sister, who had been disinherited for marrying a Duke, and her character seems to have been most gentle, lovable and generous. Though devoted to her husband she did not yield to him in everything, and told him he was wrong in his conduct to Pitt and Addington, even while she copied out the famous squibs against the "Doctor." She acted as her husband's secretary, wrote his letters and listened to his speeches which he used to recite to her before delivery. In after years she wrote a pamphlet to defend his policy and vindicate his fame, and shewed more grasp of either than the laborious Mr. Stapleton, for all his two-thousand pages. "Joan and I think this," "Joan bears all like a little heroine," "Joan—my chief means of happiness," these and a thousand other fond expressions scattered through his letters show Canning's love and pride in her. "I know nobody," wrote he to Frere, "who has more to make them happy, or is more happy and thankful for the means of happiness within their power than I ought to be and *than I am*." In the "lines addressed to Miss Scott before marriage" he writes,

'Firm in thy faith the dangerous path I tread,  
Or sheltered in thy arms forget my fall.'

And he did not write or trust in vain. The love of his wife enhanced every achievement and consoled for every disappointment, for in sorrow as in joy her smile was always his triumph and her praise ever his goal.

As a bachelor Canning had lived in one of the quaint old seventeenth century houses in Spring Gardens. He now removed to South Hill Place in Windsor Forest. He loved the country, where "he always felt like a schoolboy away for the holidays," for he was passionately fond of flowers, and as enthusiastic to raise his own potatoes and turnips as Burke

or old King George. He writes with zest to Frere,\* offers to let him 20 acres, has sold 15 tod of wool and two diamond snuff-boxes, and is full of farming projects. He adds ominously "I hope you will find foreign ministering a more profitable trade," and bids him remember the orange trees for Joan's conservatory. He tells how the Princess of Wales acted as Godmother and Dundas and Lord Titchfield as Godfathers to his son, George Charles, and how Joan was worried because the new chintz bed, in which the "Fairy Godmother" was to sleep, had been wrongly done up by the upholsterer. His son "is one of the finest boys—if not the very finest—that ever was seen, plump, good-natured, lively full of health and vigour and spirits—having blue eyes, which I am assured are to turn to exactly the colour of mine and Joan's . . . and promising for his years or weeks rather beyond what it would be prudent for me to announce to a world naturally bent upon depreciating extraordinary merit." The following lines written by Canning in 1820 show the end to these fond hopes:—

"Oh marked from birth, and nurtured for the skies !  
 In youth with more than learning's wisdom, wise !  
 As sainted martyrs patient to endure !  
 Simple as unweaned infancy and pure !  
 Pure from all stain (save that of human clay  
 Which Christ's atoning blood hath washed away !)  
 By mental sufferings now no more oppressed,  
 Mount sinless spirit to thy destined rest !  
 While I—reversed our nature's kindlier doom—  
 Pour forth a father's sorrows on thy tomb."

Canning had two other sons besides poor George Charles, of whom one became a captain in the royal navy, the other the famous Indian Viceroy of the Mutiny, whose once opprobrious nickname of "Clemency Canning" is now his proudest title to honour. Canning had one daughter—Harriet—who, as a little girl, used to interrupt him amid his papers and despatches by climbing on his knee and begging him to play with her. She was married in 1825 to the Marquis of Clanricarde, and long reigned the queen of Irish Society. Brougham wrote of her, "She is the cleverest woman I almost ever knew and the most accomplished ; indeed quite worthy of her parentage." Generous, passionate and impulsive, she was a true daughter of the great statesman, and Macaulay has recorded the impression made upon him by her beauty and superb air of indignation when in his presence she poured

\* July 7, 1801—Festing, pp. 55 et seq.



scorn on the men who had deserted or calumniated her father.

But Canning was not only idolized by his family, for it was remarked, when his fortunes were at their lowest, that "no man had so little popularity or so many affectionate friends." In his youth he had loved and revered Pitt as a father, he had talked with the courtly Windham, and listened to the oracular Burke, and despite political differences had remained the fast friend of Lord Holland, Lord Grenville and Sheridan. He was the personal friend \* of Nelson, whose heroic spirit perhaps gave to his foreign policy something of its vigour and daring. He was the life-long comrade of Liverpool, Wellesley, and Huskisson, over all of whom he had extraordinary influence. Frere loved him like a brother and thought no one in the world his equal. Sturges Bourne, Charles Wynn, Robinson, Lord Boringdon, Lord Carlisle formed, with many others, the lesser satellites in his train. He possessed a charm of manner which won and dazzled at first sight. Tom Moore came away from the first meeting swearing he would never write another line against him. Once a gentleman appeared at the Alfred Club, and desiring to dine immediately, was admitted to the coffee-room where a legal dinner was in progress. So extraordinary agreeable and interesting was he that on his departure the chairman rang the bell and demanded his name. "That, Sir, is Mr. Canning, the Prime Minister," replied the scandalized official, and is said to have resigned as a protest against such lack of discernment.\* The chairman had paid a compliment to Canning as great as that of Johnson, when he said that no one could talk with Burke under an archway without discovering him to be an extraordinary man. Many great men have strutted, declaimed and enforced applause from their own family and their friends, but in private intercourse Canning was simple, natural, resistless, full of fun and merriment, and without thought of shining or superiority. Rush has an account of a small dinner given at Gloucester Lodge, the later home of Canning—a villa two miles from town embowered in trees, with a smoothly shaven lawn and leafy winding paths of shade. Huskisson, Grenville, Robinson and several of the diplomatic

\* Nelson's motto "*Palmarum qui meruit ferat*" was adopted from a quotation made by Canning in his famous eulogy of the Victory of the Nile, Dec. 11, 1798.

† This anecdote—long doubted is now established. Grant Duff's notes from a Diary, 1873-81, I. 198.

corps were present. Canning's "quick eye was all round the table, his aim was to draw out others." He proposed the "Twenty Questions," a game in which the interrogators are allowed twenty questions to find out from their adversaries the object of their thoughts. Canning and Robinson catechized Rush and Grenville. After the twentieth answer Canning sat silent for some time, and then a little tremulous but with a merry twinkle, said, "I think it must be the wand of the Lord High Steward." A burst of applause followed; but here the diplomatists humorously intervened, and asked him to discontinue or else he might find out their secrets.

Perhaps a few strokes of his own pen will show Canning among his friends in the clearest light. The first letter is to the Reverend W. Douglas and bears the date June 13, 1813, and shows how merry was Canning's spirit, even when his political fortunes were at their lowest ebb. Douglas was a college friend of whom while at Christ Church Canning wrote:—

"That the stones of the chapel are both black and white  
Is most undeniably true,  
But as Douglas walks over them morning and night  
It's a wonder they're not black and blue."

Bulk was evidently accompanied by laziness, for Canning's demands are peremptory. "We want to go to Ascot on Friday\* and if you will look to the almanack at the beginning of your prayer book, you will find by accurate calculation that, unless you write, by return. . . . we cannot get your letter on Friday. . . . I humbly request your forgiveness for presuming to abstract your attention from things spiritual for so long a time as it will take you to read and answer this letter, but I rely on the meek forgiveness of your temper and profession for my pardon, and in the joyful hope of a speedy reply I conclude with subscribing myself—for myself and Sturges, (Bourne) Your Holiness' most devoted servant, George Canning." Here he is at play and now a glimpse of him at work. He is taking the waters at Bath and writes to Frere Jan. 8, 1825.† "I have two youngers of secretaries with me whom I work very hard all the morning till about half past one, when Liverpool presents himself at the door on a grey mare and with a pair of huge jack boots, of the size and consistency of fire buckets (only not lettered). I mount a grey horse to join him on his ride (with one or other of my

\* Add. MSS. 27,337. B.M.

† p. 265. Festing—Frere.



aide-de-camps) and with boots not quite so large and stiff as his, but in revenge with a pair of large gouty woollen shoes over them. In this fashion we parade through the town. In the evening I send my youngers to the play or ball, and I go and drink tea with my mother, and then about half past ten home to bed."

From the time of his marriage Canning lived\* so retired and private a life that he could avow on his honour in Parliament that he never heard a word of scandal about the Duke of York till his misdeeds became the subject of Parliamentary Inquiry. Before this he had been the life and soul of every company which he entered. "After George Selwyn, and perhaps Tickell, there has been no such man this half-century," said Sydney Smith, and neither of these had any pretensions to delicate or refined wit. Lady Erroll, who hated Canning, no sooner got into conversation with him than "I was obliged to laugh at some of his fun, which I had settled not to do" He talked as well as he spoke, and Stratford Canning, who had known all the wits and statesmen of Europe, thought he had never met the equal of his cousin in conversation. When Madame de Stael came to England Canning was a constant visitor at her house, where he met the Duc de Broglie, Sheridan and the learned Mackintosh. But the only house at which he was often seen after 1800 was that of Lydia White, a spinster who presided over one of the last of English salons. There were to be seen both authors and politicians—Castlereagh with his stately air and cold handsome mask-like features, Charles Ellis his rival's second in the famous duel, and Hookham Frere bubbling with wit and merriment. There too was Scott, kindly and genial, full of his old-world legends which he told with a homely burr. Byron with his pale proud face, black curls and gloomy air listened impatiently to Admiral Sir Sidney Smith, who told him of his exploits and his wrongs. Moore, fussy, vain and sentimental, often sang and played his Irish melodies, whilst Rogers listened with a sardonic smile. There too is Canning himself, pale and handsome, joking with Frere and Scott, bandying repartee with Rogers, soothing the vanity of the Admiral and praising the poems of Byron. Truly

'Doris amara suam non intermiscuit undam.'

How strange a contrast to those stormy struggles in the

\* Lord Brougham (Histl. Sketches, Canning) rightly and clearly refutes the slander of Sydney Smith that Canning was a 'diner-out.'

Cabinet with Eldon or Wellington, or in Parliament with Brougham or Lambton!

The jokes of Canning are a legend and a proverb, and the flotsam of a generation of unknown or forgotten wits has been claimed as his sovereign right. His vindication is writ large through both letters and speeches, but a few authentic examples of his conversational wit are preserved. He had both wit and humour, both epigrammatic point and boisterous fun were his in an extraordinary degree. The nineteenth century had shown itself superior to every other in the comparative disuse of that worst form of wit—puns—and Canning used them but sparingly. He nicknamed ‘Doctor’ Addington’s house, which was built in a very Italian style, the villa Medici. He wrote this epitaph on Mrs. Crewe’s dog Quon—buried near a creamery:—

“Poor Quon lies buried in this dairy  
And is not that a sad quandary.”

Londonderry said to him one day—“I saw a Dutch picture of the animals going into the ark—the elephant came last, why was that?” “Oh,” said Canning, “he was packing up his trunk.” But he excelled most in humorous contrasts of opposites, in ludicrous images and flashes of quaint fancy. “There is no first fault for church at Eton, father,” says his son. “Nullum tempus occurrit ecclesiae, my boy,” said Canning. The editors of the *Microcosm* sat in council on the line, “By the blue lustre of her languid eye.” We must change the epithet ‘languid,’” said they. “How about ‘swivel?’” said Canning. When the Privy Council were arranging for a reception of the king of the Sandwich Isles, one councillor said, “We can’t leave Byng out.” Byng was Master of the Ceremonies and nicknamed “The Poodle.” “He’ll go under the table,” said the witty Foreign Secretary. Tom Moore used to say that those who did not appreciate the following had no perception of real wit. “Pray, Mr. Canning,” said a lady, “why have they made the spaces in the iron-gate at Spring Gardens so narrow?” “Oh, ma’am,” said he, “because such very fat people used to go through.” On one occasion the African Society of which Canning was a Vice President demanded twenty guineas from him, ignorant that he had already given a subscription. Discovering this awkward slip they sent a deputation of three, headed by Wilberforce, to explain. “Never surely,” said Canning, “was so splendid an embassy sent to make atonement for so small an offence since the mission of Ulysses Ajax and Phoenix to



apologise for the seizure of Briseis, who in those days was probably worth about twenty-one pounds." Last of all there is the certainly characteristic and surely authentic speech at a fish dinner. "Gentlemen, this is a fish dinner. Fish drink much and say little. While you follow their example in the first respect, allow me to follow it in the second!"

As the Puritans loved their Bible so the statesmen of the eighteenth century loved their classics. Burke and Windham travelled by stage coach from Edinburgh to London and talked of nothing else. Fox was wont to solace himself with Lucretius and Theocritus after a night's losses at Faro. Wellesley prided himself more on his Latin verses than on his Indian administration. Pitt and Grenville once met to discuss points of policy, but forgot their business and sat up over Cicero and Homer till far into the night. Once after a dinner-party at Pitt's the measured tones of the host and the witty sallies of Canning ceased, and the company turned round to find them with their heads bent together over a classic. Of all scholar-statesmen Canning was the most elegant, learned and correct. This classical spirit moulded that side of Canning's nature impenetrable to new ideas, which rejected Reform in the sphere of politics and Romance in the region of literature. The crude absurdities of the early romanticists no doubt provoked censure, and the "Anti-Jacobin" justly ridiculed the Schiller of the "Robbers" and the Goethe of "Stella." But was Canning alive to the greatness of "Wallenstein" or "Faust?" He corresponded but had few literary sympathies with de Staël and Chateaubriand. On several occasions he stayed near Windermere and became acquainted with the Lake poets. "What does Mr. Canning know about modern poetry," said Wordsworth impatiently, "though," he added, "you could not meet a cleverer man." "Classic Canning" had praised the verses of both Byron and Scott; but he loved best the stately measure and resounding line of Dryden, forgetting that in the hands of Pope and his successors it became first metallic and monotonous, and then intolerable. Scott was urged by him to attempt a poem in the "Drydenic habit," which he did with miserable success. It is, however, to the credit of Canning's taste that he preferred Dryden to Pope, and Addison and Johnson to Junius, and was catholic enough to love and appreciate both Moliere and Ben Jonson, Shakspeare and Dante. His own serious poems with those of Rogers are the last relics of the old school, the last slaves who danced in the fetters of its rigid conceits and

pedantic classicism. "The New Morality" is full of vigour and has some splendid lines. Of other poems the lines to his intended bride are dignified and stately, the epitaph on his son has a tender pathos, whilst the fine verses on Nelson were most esteemed by the author. But as a serious poet he is far behind himself as a parodist and wit, where he attained all but the highest rank. Yet he attached little importance to his squibs and comic verses, which once written were flung aside and forgotten. It is only because his verses are concerned with political or ephemeral events that literature has forgotten more of them than it should. He was in fact a political Gilbert, and many happy and proverbial phrases issued from his mint, as "The friend of every country but his own," "The Friend of Humanity," "The Candid Friend," 'Those who very little mean, but mean that little well.' If men of genius create platitudes, and men of talent polish or repeat them, his place is easily assigned.

The eighteenth century is the age of letter-writers, of the cold and stately Pope, the elegant and epigrammatic Chesterfield, and the gay insouciant Walpole. To these models Canning's letters are as unlike as possible, full of vigour and wit, boisterous and exuberant, usually natural, easy, and unaffected. A careful anthology, pruned of those dry details and business matters over which ministers spend so many quires, would be as interesting from a literary as from a personal point of view. The usual prose style of Canning, in the articles\* he is known to have written, is somewhat disappointing, doubtless because in almost every case he was assisted by others, so that his wit and eloquence have been overwhelmed in the dust-storm of their commonplace. Still they are not without touches of his peculiar humour with its exuberant extravagance. In two Quarterly articles on the currency question Canning makes as merciless fun of Sir John Sinclair, a fiscal heretic, as ever he did of Vansittart in the Commons. The passages are too long to quote but are full of his buoyant and irresistible wit. In another he satirizes Brougham, who had domineered over the Committee of Education and mistranslated some of the college statutes on which he had reported: "Ego et committeus meus had applied ourselves with much attention to assist the legislature in making a selection (of Fellows for a proposed College of Inquiry into the state of Education.) It is even affirmed, we

\* Recently identified in the Quarterly Review by Mr. J. A. R. Marriot.



know not how truly, that with the help of the gentlemen of the British Museum, the learned Institutor had actually constructed the statutes of his foundation in that language, of which his late researches have made him so absolute a master; and that the oaths . . . to be taken by each Fellow upon his admission ran in something like the following terms; the first, 'se nunquam duo vel plura brevia intra biennium accepisse;' the second of more awful import . . . 'se nullas prorsus habere possessiones praeterquam unam purpuream baggam flaccescentem omnino inanitatis causa.' Brougham added that the College must not close their eyes to 'spiteful, malignant and anonymous suggestions,' and Canning in a spirit of exquisite raillery compares this to the Inquisition. This article was so admired that Dr. Monck, who contributed the substance, received a bishopric from the notice into which it brought him, though none credited him with the wit. But though thus making fun of Brougham's crude suggestions, Canning was not one of those narrow and pedantic Tories who held the monstrous doctrines thus defined by Praed:—

"Oh let them not babble of Greek to the rabble  
Nor teach the mechanics their letters,  
The labouring classes were born to be asses,  
And not to be aping their betters."

He believed in and argued for the provision of a gradual system of national education, by an extension and subsidization of the schools then in existence.

Only one out of seven contributions displays his literary talent to its fullest extent. The Article on "Austrian State Papers" (Quarterly, May, 1809) is one of the best of our political essays, presenting the case against Napoleon in language full of eloquence, dignity and prophetic significance. Nowhere else will be found in so short a compass so admirable a summary of English policy, save perhaps in the famous despatches. Many of these were copied in Canning's own clear, bold, elegant hand, for he loved to write his own despatches as Michael Angelo loved to hew out his own statues. If these despatches have any faults they betray a slight impatience, an anxiety to vanquish rather than to humour an adversary. But these errors have been exaggerated and are chiefly confined to his first period of office. Of these early efforts witty Tom Moore said he wished Pye (the Laureate) and the foreign Secretary would exchange places, because then there would be more prose in the despatches, and certainly more poetry in the birthday odes. This was

cruel for the State-paper style is certainly less ornate and florid than that of the orations, and is often exquisite in its finish and precision of phrase. Great dialectical skill, which never for a moment obscures the meaning, is united to an incomparable exposition of detail. Their masterly grasp of principles and exalted and manly sentiments make some of these despatches the noblest State papers in the language. Though he spent hours in refining his sentences and smoothing his periods, Canning was no artist of empty phrases. Beneath the eloquence lay the soundest and most practical system of Statesmanship. He was no mere Addison or Mat Prior, and though he may have been always the most literary of statesmen he was never only the most statesmanlike of litterateurs. His despatches are as truly the classics of foreign policy as Stowell's judgments are classics of international law.

English oratory declined during Canning's later years and he was left—like Ben Jonson—to prolong to another age the unfaded lustre of a great literary tradition. New conditions and demands, transforming the whole character of the age, had arisen and influenced every art—including that of oratory.—"Speaking in the Commons," Canning told Rush, "must take conversation for its basis." A studious or formal arrangement of parts—exordia perorations and so forth was out of place. But method and arrangement were indispensable and everywhere you must aim at reasoning, while, "if you would be eloquent you might at any time, but never at any appointed time." Burke and Windham would not have approved these maxims, which show how accurately Canning had gauged the changing temper of the times. He would drop into the lobbies to pick up the general sense and opinions, but he forgot that the success of a speech, appealing only to the reason, depends on its being intelligible to the stupidest man in the House. As Coleridge said, "Canning should put on the asses skin before he enters Parliament." Had he condescended to be dull or forgotten to be witty, had his ideas of conversation conformed to those of the ordinary man, his loss as an orator would have far more than balanced his gain as a Parliamentary leader.

But where contemporaries thus saw blemishes, posterity has discovered patches of the true imperial purple. Here Canning resembled another great orator Burke, though the audience of the latter was exclusively confined to the press and the future. Brougham and Pitt, Gladstone and Fox are now almost



unreadable, save for a few great efforts, just because their utterances were so appropriate to the moment and the audience. It is Canning's supreme merit to have had a practical grasp of the questions before him, but never to have neglected the larger horizon beyond. His speeches are, if anything, more filled with broad principles than successful parliamentary orations should be. Profounder maxims of State policy can be collected from his speeches than from anyone except Burke, and Burke never led and never could have led the Commons. Nor is any style on the whole less diffuse or more lively, none certainly is more clear and lucid whether in argument or statement. Lord Holland called him "the first logician in Europe," and he is undoubtedly the most systematic and precise of English orators. The illustrations, the banter, the epigrams, which dazzled and blinded his audience, served only to obscure the firm and compact outlines of the logical structure. Fragments and notes of speeches show that the form and scheme was most carefully prepared, but that the happiest phrases and flashes of wit were either impromptus or at any rate not painfully elaborated like those of Sheridan. Creevey called him the "Merry-man or the Joker," and in Parliamentary wit he excelled Disraeli and rivalled Sheridan. The lightning of his ridicule flashed even amid the thunder of denunciation. Nor are the well-known the sole or even the best examples of his wit\* many are buried beneath the dreary masses of Hansard in speeches he did not care to reprint. Boisterous almost boyish humour, sustained banter, savage sarcasm and invective were all alike at command. He held a thrust was the best parry, and after piercing his opponent he had no objection to scalping him. For years he had never made a speech without making an enemy, and while sometimes their resentment was justified their hostility was always assured.

A strain of coarseness is often present, and his taste is emphatically not that of to-day, though with years and responsibility his wit grew more genial and kind. Thus Copley (Lyndhurst) made a speech which he borrowed largely from a pamphlet of Phillpotts, Bishop of Exeter. Canning replied by quoting from the popular song;

"Dear Tom, this brown jug which now foams with mild ale,  
Out of which I now drink to sweet Nan of the Vale,  
Was once Toby *Phillpotts*."

No one could do anything but laugh at this good-natured

\* v. a speech on an utterly obscure subject inimitable in wit and sarcasm in Hans. Deb. Feb. 11, 1813.

banter. When Canning wrote to Copley a month after to ask him to join his ministry he added 'Philpotto non obstante.' But perhaps the best example is to be found in the famous passage on Lord Nugent, who had gone as a volunteer to Spain, and who was as clearly related in person as in pedigree to the "phat Duke" of Buckingham. "About the middle of last July (1823) the heavy Falmouth coach was observed to proceed to its destination with more than its wonted gravity. The coach contained two passengers; the one a fair lady of no considerable dimensions; the other a gentleman who was about to carry the succour of his person to the struggling patriots in Spain. It was laden . . . with a box of most portentous magnitude. Whether this box, like the flying chest of the conjuror, possessed any supernatural qualities of locomotion I am quite unable to determine; but of this I am most credibly informed . . . that this extraordinary box contained a full uniform of a Spanish general of light cavalry, together with a helmet scarcely inferior in size to the celebrated helmet in the Castle of Otranto. The idea of going to the relief of a fortress blockaded by sea and besieged by land, in a full suit of light horseman's equipment was, perhaps, not strictly consonant to modern military operations . . . When the gentleman and his box had made their appearance, the Cortes no doubt were overwhelmed with joy, and rubbed their hands with delight at the approach of the long promised aid (of 10,000 men). That aid did come, but it came in the sense and in no other, which was described by the witty Duke of Buckingham, whom the noble lord opposite numbered among his ancestors. In the play of the "Rehearsal," there is a scene occupied with the designs of the two kings of Brentford, to whom one of their party entering says:—

"The army's at the door but *in disguise*  
Entreats a word of both your Majesties."

. . . Things were at that juncture moving rapidly to their final issue. How far the noble lord conduced to the termination, by plumping his weight into the sinking scale of the Cortes, was too nice a question for him (Mr. Canning) just now to determine." Wilberforce went home crying with laughter after this sally and Lord Nugent himself was delighted. This speech will illustrate how his wit diverted from the subject in hand. Few of the ponderous squires who listened to it understood its lessons on international law. They heard only the jokes about Lord Nugent and did not realize that he, in his



own person, was "a most enormous breach of neutrality." Canning was often as great in reply as in a set speech. His extraordinary memory and profound knowledge of history enabled him to answer with a readiness that confounded his opponents, who knew how carefully he sometimes prepared his speeches. Brougham was of all orators the best supplied with the facts and the knowledge of the moment, yet none can read the speeches of the two and not perceive that Canning always has the advantage in the larger aspects, and often in the most technical points. Is it a question of the probable success of a coup de main at Antwerp? He is at once ready with accounts of the failure of Condé at Lerida, the success of Peterborough at Monjuich and countless other instances. Is it a question of Reform? He discusses methods of electioneering under Henry VI. and Charles II. and the democratic ideals of the Puritans. Is it a question of finance? To show the power of the Crown to control the currency he quotes from Matthew Hale and Blackstone, and sketches the monetary systems from Henry III. to George III. What impromptu retort was ever happier than \* this, in reply to the accusation that he had deserted the policy of Pitt!—"It is singular to remark how ready some people are to admire in a great man the exception rather than the rule of his conduct. Such perverse worship is like the idolatry of barbarous nations, who can see the noonday splendour of the sun without emotion but who, when he is in eclipse, come forward with bells and cymbals to adore him."

The style was sometimes florid and over-elegant, brilliantly coloured but scentless like tropic flowers it seemed nurtured in an unhealthy soil and air. The speeches were so often corrected and altered for publication that the original force and vigour were impaired. The result of this care was not the polish, which reveals new beauties in the depths of a jewel, but rather like the enamel which obscures and overlays the purity of the metal on which it is placed. But humour corrected this excessive sensibility and fastidiousness, and at its best his style was characterized by grace rising towards dignity. His great versatility was shown in the two Currency Speeches, superior in lucidity and interest even to Gladstone's famous Budgets, in the speech on the conduct of the Duke of York (1810) which showed the subtlety of an advocate and the impartiality of a judge, and in the famous addresses at Liverpool and Plymouth, in which he alone of the old school

\* Feb. 24. 1826.

of orators swayed and captivated masses of people by the magic of his eloquence. A little known passage will show the uniform excellence of his serious style. It is from a speech on the Windsor Establishment for King George the Third. Nothing is more pathetic in English history than to regard this monarch in his old age, to see the most self-willed and courageous of men deprived of reason and authority at the moment of his own and England's triumph. The poor, mad, blind old King, his long white beard falling on his purple robe, his star as in mockery still gleaming on his breast, wanders from room to room at Windsor now muttering of "America" and "the Church," now listening like Saul of old to music that haply the evil spirit may depart from him. Very gently did Canning touch on His Majesty's "present melancholy and secluded condition,"

—"all nature left a blank,

And knowledge at one entrance quite shut out,"

a ruin, it is true, but a venerable ruin . . . "scathed by Heaven's lightning," but consecrated as much as blasted by the blow, he yet exhibited to the awe and veneration of mankind a mighty monument of strength and majesty in decay. He stood, like the oak of the poet stripped of that luxuriant foliage, and spreading those denuded arms, which have afforded shelter to successive generations,

"E trunco non frondibus efficit umbram."

Brougham, speaking of his oratory, said Canning was an actor though an incomparable one. Wilberforce said he never drew you to him in spite of yourself and always had the classic air of an orator addressing posterity. Both Chatham and Mirabeau were thought actors by many contemporaries, —and we must therefore suspect such evidence. Did Canning indeed lack that note of absolute conviction and sincerity which, even more than lofty political ideal or exquisite style, marks the great orator? His speeches, as written, sometimes give the impression of mere rhetoric from their rigidly complete form and their excessive nicety of diction. But orations will always seem cold and lifeless in print, and Canning's speeches were much altered for publication. Stapleton has proved Canning's deep earnestness and fervour to the satisfaction of the impartial. Some days before each great speech he was feverish and anxious, after its delivery he was faint and exhausted with passion. When he uttered that most famous of all his phrases, that conceit almost sublime in



its audacity, "I called the New World into existence to redress the balance of the Old," his voice rose almost to a scream. A contemporary says—"I shall never forget the deep moral earnestness of his tone . . . he seemed to have increased in stature his attitude was so majestic . . . his chest heaved, his nostrils dilated, a noble pride slightly curved his lips, and age and sickness were dissolved and forgotten in the ardour of youthful genius; all the while a serenity sat upon his brow that pointed to deeds of glory." The effect was extraordinary, for a moment there was a silence, even a smile upon some faces, then suddenly the atmosphere grew electric. Members leapt to their feet as one man and cheer upon cheer was echoed back from the roof-tree. "The Speech," said Lord Monteagle who heard it, "was one of the great oratorical successes of the century." At times Canning could rise to the highest levels and the torrent of nature and passion thus swept away art and reason in its impetuous flood. Wilberforce's final judgment was that as an orator Canning on the whole surpassed Pitt and Fox. Byron who had heard all the great speakers except Pitt said—"I never heard any who fulfilled my ideal of an orator, but Canning is sometimes very like one," and in verse he called him

'Our last, our best, our only orator!'

In England no one has a supreme and unquestioned sway, for although Sheridan made the greatest speech he was certainly not the greatest orator. Bolingbroke has perished, Chatham lives only in a few immortal sentences. Canning is inferior only to Fox, Gladstone and perhaps Brougham as a debater, and he surpassed them in clearness, versatility, art of statement and grasp of principle. In literary eloquence he easily distanced every great parliamentary leader, and maintained a level as high and more uniform than even such men as Plunket, Grattan, or Windham, the professed devotees of the elegant simile and the felicitous phrase. Canning's words upon the character of Pitt are the best judgment and criticism of his own oratory; "it had qualities rare in their separate excellence, wonderful in their mutual combination."

In personal advantages, which so enhance the effect of oratory, Canning was highly favoured. His stature was tall and commanding, his gestures easy and graceful, his voice if somewhat thin and shrill yet admirably adapted for intonations of invective, sarcasm, or scorn. His portraits in youth show a pale oval face and regular features, of which the expression is vivacious and daring though tinged with

melancholy. Though very handsome he hardly looks the statesman, and resembles rather a Count D'Orsay or a Byronic dandy. In the later portraits we see the real man. The brow is broad and lofty, and lined with thought and care, the eyes are dark and penetrating, the full eloquent lips are those of the orator, but the firm set of the mouth and the strong jaw show the qualities of resolution and command. The impression of vanity, self-esteem and impatience is redeemed by a suggestion of humour. There is not the majesty of Chatham, the rugged strength of Cromwell, or the overmastering power and passion of Bismarck or Napoleon. Acute insight, delicacy of apprehension, fineness of judgment are common to the portraits both of Canning and Richelieu. These are the subtle lines written upon the visage of a great diplomatist-statesman, so unlike the scars and furrows which mark the faces of the great conquerors and heroes of history.

Those who heard only the practised orator or accomplished wit little guessed the real kindness of heart or depth of feeling beneath the polished surface. Canning's kindness to poor Sheridan has been mentioned, but there are many more instances. Lord Stratford de Redcliffe tells us how a poor unacknowledged relation applied to him for help when he was a young man supported only by his small patrimony. Canning had no ready money but gave his servant a portion of his clothes and his watch that they might be sold to meet the appeal. On another occasion in the midst of his cares he wrote to Gifford, Editor of the *Quarterly*, to say he had read an able article by one David Robinson and asking his correspondent to engage him. "I hear he is very poor," adds \* the good natured Foreign Secretary. It is surely unexampled for a great minister, always the object of countless petitions and appeals, to spare time to plead unsolicited to a magazine Editor, on behalf of an obscure youth whom he does not personally know! He once wrote to Lord Granville at Paris, "do not let poor Sir Sidney (Smith) starve or go to prison. If I were at the Admiralty I would give him a post," but I think Melville could not keep him in order. He instructs Granville to give him money, though without mentioning its source, and adds kindly "say something good-natured to him from me." Wellington and Aberdeen afterwards refused the Admiral's application for a post or a pension, one of the

\* Stapleton Correspondence I. 129. 320. Canning assisted Gifford himself with money in 1826, no wonder his estate at his death was only between 5 and 6000 pounds!



grounds being that Canning had done nothing for him! Another incident shows Canning in a yet finer light. When Castlereagh died Lord Clanwilliam, the under Foreign Secretary, who thought it consistent with loyalty to the dead man to hate Canning, resigned and announced his intention of going abroad. Canning asked Planta what post he thought Clanwilliam would take, and meeting him shortly afterwards at a reception, drew him aside into the window. He began to press different posts upon him with the utmost eagerness, and finally burst into tears, remembering Clanwilliam\* "as the only person to whom he could for Castlereagh's sake be kind." In general his charity was liberal yet discriminating, and sometimes when he could not give by a still harder generosity he would with delicate courtesy reply with a full explanation of the causes which rendered it impracticable. As a patron of literature Canning was noticeable, though he, like those other great statesmen Burke, Chatham and Fox, was notoriously unskilled in music. He had little taste in art but appreciated the talent of Gillray, the greatest and most Hogarthian of caricaturists. He corresponded with him, praised some designs and suggested others, and forbade Gillray† to publish a cartoon which too mercilessly satirized "poor Sherry." Gillray declared how much he valued his good opinion and patronage, and was almost always favourable to Canning in his sketches. Canning was a generous patron of letters. He aided Southey, Scott, Coleridge and Wordsworth, and secured the success of Mackintosh's famous lectures on "the Law of Nature and Nations." He created by his active exertions the Royal Institution of Liverpool. "The Quarterly" was founded according to his plans, and enlivened by his contributions. He subscribed liberally to the Literary Fund Club, for the relief of poor and distressed authors. On one famous occasion he and Chateaubriand met at a banquet of this club, where, says the latter, "we drank a toast to the memory of Homer singing his verses for a morsel of bread." In private as in public life, Canning was the friend and patron of the poor and oppressed, and within his means no man was more generous.

Foul contemporary slanders whispered that Canning was a professional politician lavish only with public money and

\* Letters and journals of W. Cory, p.174.

† v. Correspondence of Canning and Gillray B.M. Add. MSS. 27,337. Pitt had before vainly tried to check Gillray's violence.

liberal only to his kindred. Towards his poor mother he always showed the tenderest devotion, as well as to his half-brother, for whom he secured a captain's commission. The coarseness of libellers could hardly pass over these opportunities. "For his near and dear relatives," wrote Sidney Smith, "every man in the kingdom pays his twopence or threepence a year . . . I have no idea that the Sophias and Carolines of any man breathing are to eat national veal, to drink public tea and to wear Treasury ribands." In fact Canning's poor and much-slandered mother was never on the Pension-List, but Canning accepted a sinecure of £500 a year on resigning his under-secretaryship as Ministers now receive a pension on retiring from office. His enemies computed that he had during his life obtained £60,000 from the Government for twenty years' service.\* Pitt for the same period, though indeed with higher office, received £200,000. Much of Canning's official income was spent in repairing the Lisbon Embassy, in rebuilding and enlarging the Foreign Office and in entertaining diplomatic guests. As his own patrimony and his wife's fortune were greatly impaired, and as he was never charged with parade or splendour, it is fair to assume that a good deal of his private income went in the public service. But in any case it is impossible to declare him grasping or excessive either in his demands or rewards.

That union of simplicity and subtlety, of emotion and imagination, which build up true wit and humour, tend also—though under different circumstances—towards the formation of the religious spirit. Canning believed sincerely and deeply in the fundamental truths of Christianity, by whose beauty and sublimity his heart and imagination were impressed. His religion was not paraded like that of Eldon, and was therefore the more sincere and earnest. Wilberforce tells us how he once went with Canning to hear a sermon from the eloquent Dr. Chalmers, and that he noticed with surprise the deep emotion of his friend and how his eyes often filled with tears. No man was less of a bigot than Canning as he

\* This estimate does not include Pitt's salary as Warden of the Cinque Ports. Exclusive of all pensions, sinecures, etc., Canning's official incomes on the present scale would be over £50,000—reckoning the salary of President of the Board of Control at £1000 which is probably an under-estimate; his salary as under Foreign secretary was only £500 as compared with £1500 to-day. Few will therefore blame him for accepting the sinecure of £500 yearly to eke out his official income.



shewed on other questions besides that of Emancipation. He openly described the Athanasian creed as "a human document," refusing to accept its damnatory clauses in spite of shocked and lengthy remonstrances from Dr. Phillpotts. So strict were his principles that he playfully calls it a heinous crime to pen despatches on Good Friday. Prayers were read by him every day to his household, and as Foreign Secretary he exerted himself to provide chaplains and churches at the chief ports of call for English vessels. During his last illness, exclamations of "Oh, my God! My God!" were frequently wrung from him by the intensity of pain. "You do right," \*said Dr. Farre, "to call upon your God, I hope you pray to him in secret?" "I do, I do" was the answer. "And you ask for mercy and salvation through the merits of your Redeemer?" "Yes," replied the dying man, "through the merits of Jesus Christ." As with Cromwell and many another it needed the supreme moment of the death agony to lay bare the inmost thoughts and convictions of the soul.

In his youth, Canning without parents and with the bitterest memories of childhood, was thrust into a society as licentious as brilliant, with Sheridan and Fox for his mentors and models. No wonder that his blameless morality excited the admiration of Wilberforce. The age was not only one of free living but of coarse drinking, a vice which afflicted not only Bohemians like "poor Sherry," but such models of propriety as Pitt, Sidmouth and Grey. The love of wine did not prevent Alexander from ruling the world, but it seriously hampered the deliberations of many English Cabinets. As late as 1828, the Chancellor decided that in future the Cabinet must not meet after dinner as they were inclined to be too sleepy and quarrelsome! Canning was no despiser of the pleasures of the table and he suffered from gout in later years through lack of exercise and air. But from anything like these excesses he was wholly free, and his relative sobriety and absolute purity of life amid such surroundings are indications of value for showing the sincerity and strength of his character. His courage was as undeniable as his independence, and was proved on many occasions. Charles Ellis woke him at one o'clock on the morning of the famous duel, to tell him the time at which it had been fixed. Canning turned round and slept till five o'clock when he got up. "In

\* Stapleton G. C. and his times p. 604.

what a tranquil and delightful state of mind," writes \* Planta, "he must have been in to have slept quietly at such a time." On another occasion he wrote secretly to the anonymous author of a pamphlet to inform him "that he was a slanderer and a liar and wanted courage only to be an assassin." His friends afterwards remarked that he had never been more gay and careless than at the very moment he was expecting an answer to this in the form of a challenge. The author dared not reveal his identity, but is believed to have been Hobhouse, who afterwards pronounced a warm eulogy on Canning's foreign policy and character. The incident made some impression, for when Canning summoned Sir Francis Burdett for an explanation of some expressions, it was afforded with the utmost eagerness.

How are we to account for the general attitude of suspicion, distrust or disfavour to Canning which pervades most of the diaries and memoirs and much of contemporary opinion? Was he in fact the intriguer who could not take a cup of tea without a stratagem? It is not to be denied that parts of his public conduct are greatly open to question. The assaults upon Addington were often in the worst taste and savoured something of pettiness and malice, but the case was so extraordinary and Pitt's attitude so peculiar that Canning's actions can hardly be called intrigues. The worst part of his public career is really the time of his factious opposition to "All the talents." The special question of Castlereagh in 1809 is on the whole in his favour, for he seems vigorously to have protested against the secrecy enjoined by the weakness of Portland and the reluctance of Camden. In the negotiations of 1809-12 he displayed much self-seeking and ambition, but he neither disguised his attitude nor ultimate aims. His conduct in 1827 seems to have been straightforward and honest though by no means disinterested. But these different transactions have a cumulative effect and demand a full explanation. A veil of secrecy and mystery overhung all these proceedings and in the age of Thurlow, Loughborough, Dundas, and Perceval a prominent politician without a great name was likely to be thought an unscrupulous adventurer. Canning was often histrionic and passionate and always sensitive, so anxious to explain and defend, that the public thought there was really much requiring explanation. It cannot be denied that his subtlety occasionally led him into something like casuistry

\* Poole, *Life Stratford Canning*, I. 74.



and evasion, but \* the conclusion must be that he was in the main sincere and honest. And whatever the judgment on his private conduct, that his management of our foreign policy was characterised by the most sincere even Quixotic love of truth and principle even his enemies must admit. Most of his difficulties in fact arose from independence and a steadfast adherence to principles not fully accepted by either party, and hence the jealous fear entertained of his genius and ability. If Mr. Gladstone with a small but resolutely independent following became an object of hatred and suspicion to both parties for twenty years after 1846, how easy is it to understand the attitude of Whigs and Tories to Canning, without imputing to him base or dishonourable motives? It was this firm conviction of the truth of his principles, this disinclination to compromise or yield his own views, which rendered Canning of all great parliamentary leaders the least skilled in party tactics and arts of management. In philosophic grasp and expression of political ideas he has been surpassed only by Burke, but the Tories as a whole refused to follow him though he so steadfastly opposed Reform. Peel simply adopting his ideas was able therewith to regenerate and liberalise the old Tory party, and his success was almost solely due to his personal qualities. But Canning was too hasty, excitable and irritable for the petty negotiations in the formation of a ministry. He readily showed his contempt for men less clever than himself, "the invincible and innumerable army of fools" was always marshalled against him. The real moderation of his views was masked by the passion of his manner, he appeared to dictate revolutionary proposals when he advanced modest views. An amusing instance of this is found in Lord Malmesbury, who records in his Diary of 1807 that Canning, who had just been made Foreign Secretary, is not yet a statesman, and hints that he has been prematurely forced. A few pages further on he is extolling Canning's instructions and despatches as "incomparable," and giving extravagant praise. Canning was not always without tact as he showed in his control of the Lisle negotiations, as President of the Board of Control, and in his coalition with the Whigs in 1827.

\* The men who really knew him best testify to this. Sir Robert Wilson, Planta, Hookham Frere, Lord Holland, Stapleton, Stratford Canning and Newton are all his strong advocates. No men knew more or as much of the secret workings of Canning's mind, and, of these, Frere and Stapleton are alone really prejudiced in his favour.

But in general he trusted too much to the ascendancy of genius, and thought it beneath him to be conciliatory or pliant. There was a vein of coarseness in his composition as well as a violence of manner which displeased many. On one occasion he compared the conduct of Lord Folkestone to that of a drunken helot. Such an odious instance of bad taste explains why one contemporary said "Canning could never be a gentleman for three hours together." Where the political and social world were almost identical such personal defects or insults had much influence.

After succeeding to the lead in the Commons in 1822 Canning forbore to use the scalping knife, though he would keep up a whispered commentary on the debate to Sir T. Fowell Buxton, which would have convulsed the House had they heard it. But the old fury flamed out when Brougham declared "he (Mr. Canning) had exhibited in his own person the most incredible specimen of monstrous truckling that the history of political tergiversation could furnish." "I rise to say that this is false!" cried Canning in a voice of thunder. The provocation was gross but so was the denial, and both members were ordered into the custody of the Sergeant till Brougham explained away his words, according to the Pickwickian sense, and the incident closed. But it illustrated how far Canning was from possessing the calm and inflexible patience of the ideal leader of the Commons. But though thus sensitive, irritable and sometimes violent, there was nothing petty or mean or spiteful in his composition. Just after Scott had written the letters of Malachi Malagrowther, which greatly damaged the Government and hindered their currency measures, he bestirred himself to get the King to befriend the great novelist in his pecuniary troubles. When James Mill the great Radical applied for an examinership in the Civil Service of the East India Company the Tories implored Canning to refuse his application. Canning declared that radicalism was no hindrance to a man being a good examiner and gave him the post. Then again he used every effort to reinstate his old but Radical friend Sir Robert Wilson in his command, from which he had been dismissed for the extraordinary offence of stopping a riot and dispersing a crowd. These slight traits mark the great man and show his lofty indifference to the more sordid aspects of party politics.

His personal character does much to explain his political successes and failures. His partial acquiescence in older literary and religious tendencies compares with that strange



mixture of liberality and caution, which made him advocate Emancipation and oppose Reform. His fancy and wit show how superficiality came to be charged against him as a fault, whilst his independent conduct in private life throws a flash upon his political consistency. His chivalry and generosity, combined with a sensitive pride and ambition, do much to enlighten the dark parts of his career—to show why he resigned with Pitt and disbanded his followers in 1813, why he accepted office in 1816, and retired from it in 1820. His success at the Foreign Office is explained by the depth and power of his mind and character. The most prominent of all his gifts was an almost miraculous quickness of apprehension and insight. He saw everything in a flash, he divined the weak point of an opponent or a policy in a second. He had a mind capable of forming great generalisations and large systems of policy, and yet of applying them in minute detail. No one ever gave a more brilliant example of mingled concentration and detachment\* as Canning, when he dictated to three secretaries at once three despatches on totally different subjects, and kept each one writing as fast as pen could drive. To keep two secretaries thus employed was an ordinary almost a normal exercise of Canning's powers, for his thoughts flowed too fast for a single pen to register them. He worked with twenty-horse power and his extraordinary industry and knowledge served only to sharpen and increase this perceptive power. By its aid he saw into the minds and divined the motives of Alexander, Metternich, Chateaubriand. He played on their fears and their ambitions, and turned both to the advantage of England.

The great qualities of his intellect were balanced by an equal strength of character. He was often indeed too overbearing and masterful, liking to oversee every detail not only in his own office but elsewhere. But it may be questioned whether the personal Staff of the Foreign Office or the embassies was ever more admirably organized or carefully supervised than by him. Before his time† secrets were often almost openly sold to foreign courts, the messengers were idle, careless and talkative, it was not even safe to circulate Cabinet memoranda. All this he soon altered, the leakage of secrets was stopped, expenses cut down, abuses checked, pensions and salaries examined and even details carefully supervised.

\* Napoleon is said, on dubious authority, to have once accomplished this marvellous feat.

† Malmesbury IV. 380.

A single instance will illustrate at once his minute attention to business and kindness of heart. Learning that the porter at our Paris embassy had died leaving a destitute wife, Canning at once assigned to her a small pension. Small wonder that, though all were hardworked, his subordinates from Planta down to the meanest messenger almost worshipped the chief who worked harder than them all. The ambassadors were kept to their work as rigidly as the clerks, some were rebuked for not sending full reports or good information, others censured or recalled for exceeding their powers. But though so rigorous and exacting Canning never discouraged an initiative which produced good results. Frere, Jackson, Stratford Canning and Garlike all on occasion were independent, and all received warm praise for their actions. Canning was entirely free from red-tape and routine, from that worship of forms which binds and hampers ministerial action. The famous rhyming despatch to Bagot and the "padlock" to Strangford are but the two best instances of that wit, which often illumined even the driest and most formal of his communications. Old stagers were shocked at this incorrigible jesting, but humour is one of the greatest gifts of statesmanship. The mild wiggings he administered to the dilatory Frere and Granville for slackness in official duties gained considerably in point and emphasis from their unwonted style of reproof. His refusal to take the united deputation of the Allies seriously, when they called in a body to demand A'Court's dismissal, averted a grave situation. His humour also did something to make palatable his extensive ambition and insatiable desire for rule and influence. Ward speaks of Canning's "ever-active mind presiding over everything, anticipating difficulties, providing against contingencies or suggesting expeditions, now beseeching for a delay in the deputation of some dangerous foreign agent, now arranging for the scattering on the coast of France some ingeniously constructed state paper." It was this resolve to be first, to preside over all departments, that for a time effected his ruin, as it had that of Chatham, and deprived his country of his inestimable services at a time of need. But though personally less ambitious in later years, he adhered as firmly to his political convictions which he forced upon his colleagues. The man who influenced the jealous and suspicious Castlereagh, who so often overcame the opposition of both Wellington and Eldon, must have had a will of iron. The ascendancy he acquired over his fickle and unstable sovereign is another proof. Over Rush and Clay he had



exercised extraordinary influence, Clay yielded to him in almost everything, Rush openly regretted that his Home-Government could not agree with Canning. The Czar Nicholas and even Charles the Tenth himself acknowledged the same potent spell. Throughout Europe his influence and authority were so great just because all men knew that he never threatened or remonstrated in vain. The vigour and the courage with which he upheld morality in politics was only equalled by the practical success of his policy. Cool judgment, sincerity of purpose, strength of will, quickness of eye and sureness of touch, these qualities distinguished his foreign policy as well as his private character, and "if he continued to be a lover of fame he also passionately loved the glory of his country."

Marvellous indeed must have been the abilities which raised Canning from the humblest station and enabled him to excel almost all English statesmen in sheer brilliancy of wit and intellect. But the extraordinary powers of his mind are best seen by his union of the most opposite characteristics. The minister of the Crown could be the servant of the people, the opponent of aristocratic pretensions could yet be the opponent of Reform. The foreign minister, whose policy was always that of peace, was more feared than the minister always storming for war. The statesman who exalted the fame of England secured the tranquillity of the world. The soundest and most practical of statesmen could yet be the accomplished scholar, the wit, the man of letters. If haughty, irritable, and ambitious, he was also genial, unassuming and good-natured. The most wicked of wits was yet the most chivalrous and sensitive of men. It is this diversity of gifts, this meeting of contradictions that is the charm and the riddle of his nature, which defies the application of ordinary canons and makes us admit with Frere, that "Canning's character is not a theme for prose." But however noble and disinterested we may deem his public conduct, however admirable his private life, however dazzling his wit or oratory, his real claim to greatness must rest upon his foreign policy. Greatness has many sides and many aspects, Adam Smith was great because he discovered a new science, Frederic was great because of his practical achievements, Cromwell because of his moral ideals. If you would know a great man turn to his age, has he built up institutions, revolutionised thought, upheld idealism, reformed the morals or remoulded the policy of his country? It may be said with perfect truth that at

a time of intense difficulty and danger, after the most fearful and unexampled of political convulsions, Canning's courage was undismayed and his mind was able to survey the present and prepare for the future. He first proposed, and finally made part of international law, principles which the terror and the chaos of past years had induced both monarchs and nations to disregard or forget. He averted that universal war which seemed on the point of breaking out, he perceived the new forces in motion, and whilst recognizing the new nations defended the old against their attack. He boldly steered over a strange uncharted sea beneath alien stars which revealed nothing save to the eye of genius. Though consistently practical he infused into England's foreign policy something of his own generous passionate spirit, for however firmly he trod on the earth he never forgot the sky overhead. Chateaubriand described him as the Englishman whose international influence in politics had been equal to that of Newton and Shakespere in science and letters. Heine said that the eighth of August, the day on which Canning died a martyr's death, should be consecrated to his memory as a holy day in the Calendar of Freedom. The extravagance of contemporaries passes by, posterity adjusts the balance and history exchanges advocacy for judgment. It will say of Canning that he first introduced a liberal tone into continental diplomacy, and advocated that doctrine of nationalism which has dominated the whole of subsequent European history, and that he effected this revolution in the face of immense difficulties but without the necessity of war. He was the guardian and statesman of Liberty in its truest and noblest sense. Englishmen will remember his great name, and reverence it the more when they think that he, who yielded to none in his love of country, was yet able to claim the regard of the world.



## CHAPTER XV

### THE LEGACY OF CANNING

ALMOST the last words of Canning as he lay on his death-bed were these\*—"I have laboured hard for the last few years to place the country in the high station which she now holds. Two years of the Duke of Wellington's Government will undo all that I have done." The prediction was almost prophetic enough to confirm the poet's saying on the inspiration of dying genius. The attitude of Wellington's Government towards the East was so complete an abandonment of Canning's whole policy that it need not here be discussed. It is enough to say that while Turkey complained of being betrayed Greece considered us as her enemy. But Wellington's treatment of the questions of Portugal and France well illustrates how Canning's policy could be reversed, in so far as it was possible to do so without violating existing engagements. On July 30, 1827, the agreement had been drafted by which Don Miguel agreed to marry Donna Maria and swore to accept the Constitutional Charter. Canning had shown an undisguised preference for constitutional rule and was resolved that Don Miguel, who was Absolutist to the core, should not enter Portugal under false pretences and then overthrow the new institutions. Accordingly Lord Dudley instructed the English ambassador to leave in the event of Don Miguel assuming the title of king. On the other hand when Miguel had usurped that title Aberdeen spoke of him and his Absolutist supporters as "the friends of England," and by implication censured the Constitutionalists as "not friendly to good government in any country." He even went further and forcibly interfered on Miguel's behalf, by dispersing political refugees landed in England from Portugal. Towards France the attitude of the Wellington Government was equally unfortunate and at least a tacit countenance was given, not only

\*p. 59, Lady Canning's pamphlet.

to Miguel, but to the absolutist ministry erected in France at the end of 1829. We can understand Lady\* Canning declaring "It would be difficult to invent a system of policy (if system it can be called) more directly opposed to Mr. Canning's than the one pursued by the present Government." We can admire the grand sincerity of the great soldier, who insisted on a reduction of the forces and a peace-at-any-price policy, and do justice to the gentle trustfulness by which Aberdeen sought to conciliate foreign rulers at the expense of foreign nations. But it is impossible to view † their speeches or their actions without seeing that they had broken all direct connection with the later tendencies of Canning's policy. A lack of sympathy, enterprise and daring had reduced the once famous system to this melancholy end, and rendered England helpless and powerless. The old difference between the measures and the men was again discerned. We do not read that Omphale, when she forced her distaff on Heracles and possessed herself of his club, became thereby the slayer of men.

In examining Canning's legacy to England and the world it is needful to distinguish its immediate and material consequence, as produced by Canning and frustrated by his instant successors, and the enduring and ultimate character of the achieved results which they could not overthrow,—of his intellectual conceptions and ideas. His policy has two parts: a body and soul, one fragile formed of the clay and dust of the wayside and the moment, the other compounded of more ethereal essences—serene, immortal and imperishable. In sorrow we turn from the accelerated decay of the one to behold the continued life of the other.

Lord Acton, when passing in review all the great ministers of England, pronounced that "no Foreign Secretary has *equalled* Canning." If this judgment has not already been confirmed by the recital of his achievements it will be vain to attempt it now. But a few words may recall some of the qualities which give him this pre-eminence. Canning possessed in a very rare degree the qualities of thought and of action, not only ability to form and conceive great ideas and principles and to execute them, but an intense energy and a power of instant decision in emergencies, which enabled him to baffle the ambitious designs of England's enemies by the most brilliant of counter strokes. He was inferior only to Chatham

\* p. 28. Pamphlet on Portugal

† Especially Aberdeen's July 17, 1828, and June 26, 1829.



in the power of organizing the national strength and of planning great and successful expeditions. Nothing indeed in English history exceeds the marvellous transformation wrought by the Elder Pitt during his first ministry, the swift transition from degradation to glory, the miraculous growth of empire and of fame as it were upon the very foundations of ruin and disgrace. But no one ever credited Chatham with great profundity of thought or extraordinary diplomatic skill. Moreover the France which he humbled and disgraced was the France of Louis XV. The France which Canning opposed was the France of Napoleon, a nation full of passion and enthusiasm, inspired by the daemonic energy and splendid genius of one of the ablest of all rulers. No time was ever more full of peril for England, no enemy ever more terrible. Canning undertook against him the only decisive measures which any English statesman of the time had devised. The seizure of the Danish fleet was a master-stroke of policy, the blockade of the Tagus hardly less so, henceforth Napoleon was cut off from the sea and the continental system was destroyed. The promotion and support of the war in the Peninsular was due largely to Canning's initiative and energy, and was the only effective intervention undertaken by England on the land. Wellington indeed was not the only conqueror of Napoleon, who was pressed by many forces and many nations to the ground. But in so far as the appeal to national feeling in Spain and in Portugal awakened and stimulated similar aspirations in Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, and Italy, it is true to say that from the Iberian peninsula "issued the deliverance of Europe." No English statesman faced the great crisis of our history with as calm or unshaken a courage, or did as much as Canning to continue the war or to promote the awakening of the nations by word, example, and armed aid. During his later years at the Foreign Office Canning showed that he had not ceased to be the minister of action. The despatch of troops to Portugal in December, 1826, was a brilliant and masterly stroke which undoubtedly averted war. Had Spain retorted by a declaration of hostility,\* Canning had planned to seize Cuba and thus end the contest at a blow. The same profound strategic insight, which he shared with Chatham and Marlborough, is displayed in his Eastern policy

\*Stapleton, E. J. Correspondence II. 144. It is said, and there is good authority for the statement, that Canning when Treasurer of the Navy planned the expedition, which seized the Cape, the key of India. This is only another instance of his strategic ability.

and in his resolve that England should continue mistress of the Mediterranean.

In the sense that he could discern and strike at the weak points in an enemy's harness, Canning was a great war-minister. It is in his union of these qualities with those of a great statesman, who could survey the whole field of diplomacy, that Canning is unique among English ministers. The immediate results which followed from his successors have shown how little they understood the greatness of his conceptions and the larger aspects of his policy. Canning's sympathy towards the Greeks, his assurance of independence to them, his decision for armed intervention against the Turk, though he had protested against that principle as applied to Spain, all these actions were to Wellington either mischievous or unintelligible. But no one now thinks with Wellington, Castlereagh, and Metternich that the Greeks were rebels in the sense the Spanish or Neapolitan constitutionalists were, or that they were dangerous because they attacked the principles of true Legitimacy and settled order as maintained and expounded by the Sublime Porte. An English statesman might desire to preserve the Turkish Empire for purely political reasons, but one who defended its existence on moral grounds, as necessary to prevent the spread of revolutionary ideas, would be considered at once to have abandoned all title to statesmanship if not to sanity. Nor has any attempt to erect Turkey into a normal civilized community with recognized responsibilities yet succeeded. Canning considered the Turkish question as apart and separate from his general system of continental policy, and aimed in the East at a balance of power rather than a balance of principle. This view which he was the first to practise has only been justified and strengthened by the lapse of time.

The first object of Canning's policy, in its widest and most European aspect, was to dissolve the Holy Alliance. He had described England as contending against Napoleon for a "prize—which was the Liberty of the World." His idea of Liberty was contained in his favourite doctrine of "non-intervention," or freedom for each State to control its internal affairs. If England had stood forth against Napoleon, who had been the greatest violator and outrager of this principle, Canning was not likely to suffer the Holy Alliance to infringe it. It is now a recognized principle of international law—and it had before Canning's time been asserted by Kant and Vattel—that no one nation has the least right to interfere



with the government of another except in the case of anarchy. Yet the principles of Legitimacy as interpreted by Metternich and Alexander meant in brief that the sovereigns of Austria, Russia and Prussia guaranteed every monarch his throne, and promised to restore him to it, in case of rebellion, by force of arms. The anarchy of twenty years had frightened the statesmen of the old regime and the result was the monstrous pretensions they thus advanced and which Canning opposed. No statesman could have contended for a cause more liberal, more just, or more essential to the existence of individual nationalities. The Legitimists represented only order and stability which ended in atrophy, the Revolutionists only a progress which ended in disorder and anarchy. Canning designed to hold the balance between these contradictory principles, and so to avoid the danger of their collision, and the general war which would result from the conflict between two armed doctrines. No one now upholds the Absolutists though it would not be difficult to say something in their defence. But there are still passionate champions of Liberty who say Canning should have done more for that cause. Reflection will show how carefully Canning's policy was calculated to smoothe the way for improvement, whilst not losing the advantages of order and prescription, to provide for the growth of nationalism without the dangers of anarchy and revolution.

Let no one question the immense results of Canning's policy because they cannot hear the rolling of drums and the braying of trumpets, the measured tramp of armed legions, and the roar of meeting battle. Every wise man knows that it is often more splendid to have averted than to have arranged these theatrical spectacles. It has been shown that as long as the Holy Allies maintained their principles they constituted a danger to the continent, and accordingly there was the risk that they might arouse against them in arms the united Liberals of all Europe. Garibaldi, who had been wounded and defeated by the French in 1867, fought against Prussia for France in 1870 because she had rejected her Emperor and become a republic. If Liberal Republicans could believe that a change of government could so transform a nation but thirty years ago, what must have been their feelings during 1820-30 and what must have been the danger! The sovereigns had announced that they would go to war on behalf of one another, and this senseless provocation was an appeal to the Liberals in all lands to arise and fight side by side. It was

largely due to Canning that the violence of these opinions was abated and the necessity for this Liberal combination was withdrawn. His first object was to force the Holy Alliance to abandon their Legitimist pretensions, which amounted to a qualified right of interference with the institutions of every European State. Canning announced openly that he would "get rid of the Areopagus and all that." But his method was that of a statesman not a declaimer. He did not, as the Whigs desired, begin by terming the chiefs of the Holy Alliance "traitors" and "tyrants," but the bonds were silently relaxed and the Holy Allies diplomatically routed and defied. Canning proceeded to persuade them he was in earnest not only by words but by deeds, and they were therefore thunder-struck at his recognition of the New World and his defence of Portugal. The Conferences of the Powers, wherein they undertook the government of the World, had been marked for especial hatred by all Liberals throughout Europe. These stones of offence Canning also promptly removed. At Verona he had prevented any attempt at joint-intervention in Spain. Subsequently he prevented two congresses being summoned, of which one proposed to deal with Spanish-American affairs, another with those of Brazil. By refusing England's participation to the conference on Eastern Affairs he rendered its results and decisions futile and abortive. These and other actions brought it about that, as long as Canning lived, the Liberals of all countries saw in him their champion against the Holy Alliance, and a security for the existence of wise and tolerant doctrines.

The war between the conflicting principles of democracy and despotism, which Canning had foreseen and foretold, broke out three years after his death. The revolution movements of 1830 were no less universal than these of 1792 and 1848, though they caused less bloodshed and terror. It is significant that the whole European movement of 1830 began with a revolt in Paris against that most foolish and most unwise ministry, headed by Polignac and forced by Charles the Tenth on the nation against their will. The French people, as always haughty and high spirited, had been to the highest degree exasperated by the undisguised approval shown towards this Ministry, which had committed many arbitrary and unconstitutional acts, by Wellington and Aberdeen. France as a whole looked at this action of England in the old light of arbitrary interference by foreign powers. We know the terrible results of such intervention



in 1792, and the French belief in some similar design did something to accelerate this new revolution in 1830. Canning had personally detested Polignac, and his principle of neutrality would in any case have prevented him from passing any expressions of approval upon these absolutist actions and tendencies. On small causes great events sometimes depend, and Canning would certainly have refrained from flinging a fresh brand on to those smouldering embers in France, which soon flared up and set the whole of Europe aflame. The influence of Canning's principles, however, had their ultimate effect. Wellington and his colleagues, after their initial blunders, laboured hard and with some success to narrow the range of the struggle throughout Europe, and press upon foreign powers the advantage of amnesty to vengeance as treatment for defeated insurgents. Most significant of all, the changed government in France was quietly accepted and recognized, because it was the *de facto* though it was not the "legitimate" government.

The crown and triumph of Canning's policy was seen in the Congress of 1831, which met for the arrangement of the affairs of Belgium and Holland. There his principle of non-intervention was fully accepted and made the basis of the whole settlement. Talleyrand writes from the Congress of March 28, 1831.\* "Authority is needed somewhere for the preservation of peace and order . . . I can only perceive it in one direction, that is in the alliance of the Five Powers, which as it now stands has nothing to do with the Holy Alliance. Non-intervention, when applied to the internal affairs of countries which change or modify their government, destroys the basis on which the Holy Alliance rested." Here then was a complete triumph and a complete justification and adoption of Canning's policy. He had never objected to Congresses as long as their objects were carefully defined and their jurisdiction limited. He had opposed the Holy Alliance conferences just because neither of these conditions was fulfilled, and because they led in effect to a general union of despotic rulers against any attempt to modify the institutions of any State. Metternich had accused Canning of destroying everything and building up nothing, of promoting anarchy and revolution. In the Congress of 1830-1 the Powers solemnly abandoned their principles openly professed till the very

\* Talleyrand's Mem. IV. pp. 77-8. A subsequent passage is misleading and inaccurate as a description of Canning's policy.

moment of its meeting, and accepted that doctrine which Canning had so consistently laid down, which Talleyrand now adopted, and which has become at least in theory a permanent and indestructible part of the international code. The Holy Alliance, as a system for the governance of Europe, was thus completely destroyed, but another system of international regulation had been built up by the influence of Canning. The Holy Alliance only remained as a bond to unite Austria and Russia. Palmerston, when he undertook to check the aggrandisement of Russia by "menacing her with a perfumed cane," had not the skill or the fortune of Canning in dividing his enemies. In 1848 the Czar sent Muscovite troops to aid the Austrians in crushing the Hungarian revolt, on the old pleas of maintaining order and stability, and Palmerston could only protest with vigour but without result. The Russian service, however, availed nothing and all lingering relics of the Holy Alliance were swept away by the difference between its last two supporters—Russia and Austria—at the time of the Crimean war.

So far the action of Canning had been, as it were, negative. The balance had been truly held and impartiality observed. Canning might truly claim to have been the statesman of Liberty in the sense that he had asserted the independence of small nations against great, and the right of every nation to amend its own internal institutions at will, and to have a foreign policy of its own. But the overweening pretensions of the Holy Alliance forced him out of his absolute neutrality in his later years, and made him favour Liberty in a very different sense. By Liberty the opinion of the time meant not only the independence of each nationality, but the granting to the people of each and every State some share in their own government. Canning believed that the people in every country were the origin of power and had a right to remodel their own institutions. Further, he believed that constitutional monarchy was the best of governments. But however much he approved of the growth of that tendency elsewhere, he held it inconsistent with neutrality to encourage it except by friendly advice or counsel. Any attempt to guarantee a constitution or to force one upon any country was objectionable to him, and he believed dangerous to the country and constitution thus concerned. He did not believe that institutions alone could make a nation stable, but that a happy and prosperous nation made institutions. "Show yourself possessed of stability in your present form of govern-



ment, and I will recognize it," said Canning. But he would no more recognize an unstable form of government because it was constitutional, than an unstable form of government because it was despotic. Thus he spoke of the Allies \* "having put down the constitutional systems (however little worth maintaining) of Naples and Spain—not for their worthlessness, but simply and declaredly because they were not octroyées by the sovereign." This sentence, of which the parenthesis alone concerns us, sounds for a moment almost like an utterance of Castlereagh. But it must be remembered that the constitution of 1812, which was advanced by both Spanish and Neapolitan patriots was really unworkable in practice, and soon condemned by the constitutionalists themselves. Also in this very same letter Canning was encouraging the cause of constitutional liberty in Portugal. Had he been adverse to that cause there are several occasions on which, by a mere policy of inaction, he could have destroyed all the hopes of the Portuguese constitutionalists. In his anxiety and his zeal to avail such an attitude, he was in fact driven out of his neutrality, and England was definitely committed to a pronounced approval of that constitution. At the same time his despatch of troops to Portugal was only undertaken in accordance with treaty rights, and with the view of contending against a foreign enemy. But the Whigs and the Liberals throughout the world hailed it as a design on the part of Canning to forward the constitutionalist cause with the armed hand. But such was never his attitude, he was no Don Quixote of politics who believed that a constitution suited all countries, or that all countries were suited to a constitution, or that it was the business of England to force her theories on the world. The impulse and the desire must proceed from within the country itself, but he would make every effort to protect that country against external interference. Canning desired not to retard nor to force the growth of liberty, but by moral support and encouragement only to prepare for it a healthy soil, in which he hoped it would strike root and flourish.

This attitude is entirely different from that of Palmerston or Gladstone, the two other great champions of Liberty. The attitude of the former was almost that of a huckster, who

\* Portugal F.O. June 28th, 1826. Mr. Stapleton paraphrases this (Pol. Life iii. 184) and does not give the full force of the sentence—which is a most valuable insight into the views of Canning. The recognition of the New World was of course of an exceptional character.

approached foreign powers bawling out the value of his wares. "These goods, sir, come from an old established firm, established, sir, for some thousand years. I shall not cease, sir, to importune you, unless you favour me with making trial of a sample." Palmerston's policy was thus often calculated to offend. If Canning's root-principle was 'non-interference,' Palmerston's was almost 'pan-interference.' After agitating and dazzling the Continent for a score of years, after doing much good and some evil, he finally left us without a single ally in Europe. His was a policy which resembled Blondin treading the tight rope stretched over Niagara. All admired his marvellous skill and courage in the midst of danger, but none were thereby induced to imitate or accompany him. At length his fall came, and his last years were marred by the miserable failures of his Danish projects. His brilliant but superficial cleverness failed entirely when confronted with the indomitable will and resolution of Bismarck. On the other hand, Gladstone was a champion of Liberty in no such aggressive sense. His ideas were always lofty and noble, but they lacked practical application. He seems to have imagined the ballot-box and a constitution would be a sort of compulsory and wonder-working Decalogue to the Ionian islanders, and he spoke of the Mahdi and his followers, who were seeking to establish one of the most savage and despotic tyrannies that ever existed, as "rightly struggling to be free." Yet despite these impracticable extravagances, he did much by promoting arbitration to alleviate and calm animosity between nation and nation. Above all his insistence upon the moral ideal in politics was entirely noble and worthy of the highest praise. But the practical contributions of both these statesmen, if more ostentatious, were in fact less effective than that of Canning to the cause all had at heart. In a word Gladstone was the prophet, Palmerston the bagman, and Canning the statesman of Liberty.

Canning's attitude, if cosmopolitan in one aspect, was patriotic in another, though it is wrong to describe it as "entirely English," in the sense that the policy of Disraeli could be so described. Disraeli seems to have resolved that England should play a splendid part on the world's stage, and definitely to have aimed at aggrandisement as one of his objects. On the other hand Canning emphatically disclaimed all such ideas, and during his second period of sway England acquired not a single inch of territory. He was resolved if possible to check the aggrandisement of others, but he would



not take any exclusive advantage himself, except in the way of seeking materials for compensation. Thus when France invaded Spain he retorted by recognizing Spanish America as independent. We may compare this with that brilliant and masterly stroke of policy—(as all must admit however they question its morality) by which Disraeli occupied Cyprus. This action was based apparently on the belief that Russia had some designs on Asia Minor. Canning might have done the same had Russia actually invaded that territory, but he would certainly not have begun the process before that event. On many occasions Canning checked the aggression and aggrandisement of other Powers, on many others he could have acquired territory for England, without transgressing that margin of perfidy or duplicity usually permitted to the consciences of diplomatists, but he scrupulously refrained. He held that the acquisition of fresh land by any nation would be ill bought at the price of a rupture of the territorial guarantees of Vienna. Hence the best security for the peace of the world lay in England increasing her influence rather than her direct power, and posing as the impartial arbiter of nations. This policy required the greatest skill in execution and the utmost reputation for justice and honour. Where one government invariably told the truth and acted according to its professions, it was bound to prevail against governments like those forming the Holy Alliance, which could not even trust one another. Thus Canning was able to press Austria into his service to aid him in securing the recognition of Brazil. Russia was associated with England, and Austria tossed aside, in the settlement of the Eastern question, and as a crowning triumph France was introduced into this alliance to weigh down the balance against Russia and check her schemes of aggrandisement. Here Canning showed the highest diplomatic skill and it marked the difference between him and Palmerston that the latter gave up the attempt to divide the two great Powers of the East, but endeavoured to unite France, England, Spain and Portugal against them. This was a grievous falling off, for Canning had carried the war into the enemy's camp and set one half fighting against the other. No one felt more convinced than Canning that we could not retire from Continental politics. "England should not be content with the trident," said he, "but should grasp the sceptre," and he held that our interference in Europe, while it should be only occasional, should be always emphatic. He suspected entangling alliances of a permanent character,

and trusted most to the establishment of British prestige. So immense was the influence Canning had acquired at his death, so great was the confidence and good-will of the people of other nations in him, that hardly one of the European governments would have ventured to declare war against England, for it would have been a measure too unpopular to hazard. Thus it was that he was enabled to carry into effect almost all of his great schemes, and it was this influence which he bequeathed to Palmerston, and which enabled that jaunty statesman to lord it over Europe for so long without provoking actual hostilities.\* "By these means Canning obtained over the other governments of Europe an influence which he employed not only to promote the interests of England, but the general prosperity of the world."

Towards the Old World Canning showed himself as a statesman at once original and profound. It was in realizing the effects produced by the French Revolution and Napoleon, in adapting the old diplomacy to the new conditions, in harmonizing our political and commercial needs that Canning's genius shewed itself both dazzling and resplendent. But his attitude towards the New World showed a statesmanship as skilful and more original. By his policy not only was our influence enormously increased but our material resources immensely developed. His first aim was to open up fresh markets for British goods, and though not insisting on a preferential treatment he was resolved to break down the old system of monopoly, which confined the export trade of every colony exclusively to the ports of its mother-country. In this he was entirely and triumphantly victorious. His second aim was to develop the British colonies and abolish the slave trade, and here he attained no inconsiderable measure of success. The last of his aims was political, to limit the influence of the United States, to prevent the designs of the Holy Alliance, and to make the Republics and monarchies of South America look to England for guidance. Above all he desired to bind together the Old World and New, to promote an intercourse of ideas as much as an interchange of commerce, to cool the hot blood of America and to pour new life and vigour into old Europe. Russia was speedily cowed and France, confronted by Canning with a threat of war, hastily abandoned the idea of extending Legitimacy to

\* War was declared with Russia in 1854 whilst Palmerston was out of office. The quotation below is from Lady Canning's pamphlet, p. 54.

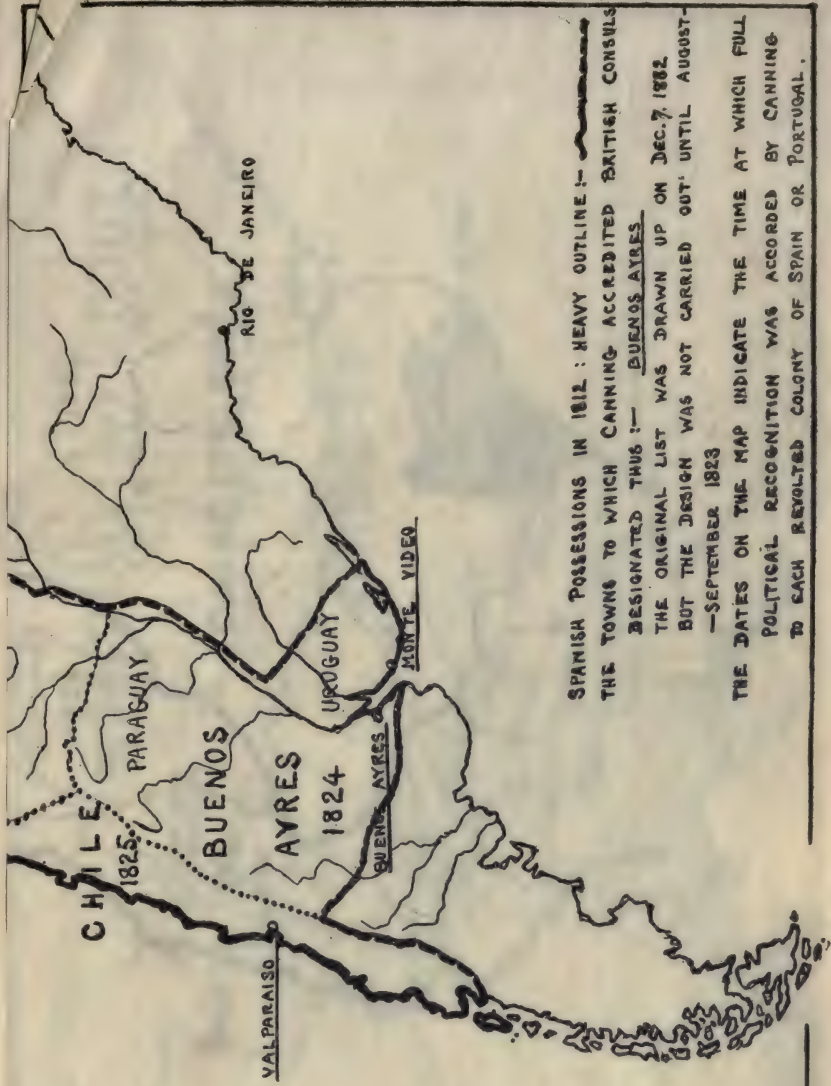


the New World. With the United States his task was more difficult. His great scheme of uniting them with England in a joint declaration against the Holy Alliance failed. Before Canning was in office they were already possessed of Florida and Louisiana, and so had become the supreme power in the new hemisphere. The Monroe doctrine, as understood by Adams, asserted this and something more. But these further pretensions were carefully qualified and restrained by Canning, Cuba was snatched from the grasp of Adams and the South American Republics were gathered round England. In spite of these limitations of the influence of the United States it is from the time of Canning that "the era of good feeling," as Americans call it, is dated; the time when England, after a period of pettiness, dispute and hostility, settled down into a steady though cautious friendship, and adopted a policy of mingled firmness and conciliation.

It remains only to give a final estimate of Canning's work. On the whole his originality is unquestioned, though his Spanish policy much resembles that of Pitt towards France between 1789-92, while he borrowed a hint from Chatham in dealing with South America. His debt to Castlereagh is small, for in his earlier policy from 1807-9 the later tendencies are foreshadowed, whilst he himself, after 1818, was the main cause of Castlereagh's change of front. As far as we can judge Wellington endeavoured to model his ideas from 1822 onwards, upon what he thought would have been the policy of Castlereagh. Londonderry, the brother and confidant of Castlereagh, declared Canning had departed entirely from his policy. If this be true Castlereagh's conduct of affairs after 1822 would have been as inefficient as it was before 1818. In judging Canning it is well to remember that no man ever contended against greater adversaries or against more formidable coalitions, and that in so far as his work was imperfect we may ascribe it to these causes. Richelieu had only to meet the incapable Buckingham, the visionary Ferdinand and the somewhat dull-witted Olivarez, Bismarck fought such phantoms as Rechberg and Napoleon the third, Chatham had always on his side the ablest general and one of the ablest statesmen in Europe—Frederic the Great. Canning faced Napoleon, Metternich, and Adams, not to speak of such men as Alexander, Chateaubriand, and Villèle. He wrested the Danish and Portuguese fleets from Napoleon and undertook against him the decisive Peninsular war. Metternich and Alexander were defied and baffled both in the New World and

the Old, in spite of the fact that they headed the League of the three strongest military powers in Europe. France, after vainly opposing Canning, became his enthusiastic ally. In the New World Canning contended at a disadvantage, but on the whole the honours were divided between him and Adams. If we look for practical results to his policy we see Portugal owing to him her security, Greece and the South American republics their existence, Europe its peace and tranquillity. Above all the world's chief debt to him is that it was owing to his influence that the Holy Alliance was dissolved and Liberalism introduced into European diplomacy. The doctrine of nationality, which is the most important and dominating fact of European politics to-day was first advanced and asserted by Canning. If these achievements are not enough to bestow upon him immortality it is vain to seek for others. If England does not enshrine and hallow the name of Canning it will be a sign that it is not well with her. For of all her foreign ministers none have loved her more passionately, and none have left a name more instinct with the memories of freedom or of light, or more justly entitled to the gratitude not only of England but of mankind.





SPANISH POSSESSIONS IN 1812: HEAVY OUTLINE:--  
 THE TOWNS TO WHICH CANNING ACCREDITED BRITISH CONSULS  
 DESIGNATED THUS:-- BUENOS AYRES

THE ORIGINAL LIST WAS DRAWN UP ON DEC. 7, 1802  
 BUT THE DESIGN WAS NOT CARRIED OUT UNTIL AUGUST--  
 --SEPTEMBER 1803

THE DATES ON THE MAP INDICATE THE TIME AT WHICH FULL  
 POLITICAL RECOGNITION WAS ACCORDED BY CANNING  
 TO EACH REVOLTED COLONY OF SPAIN OR PORTUGAL.

HTUOS GUA JATINCO

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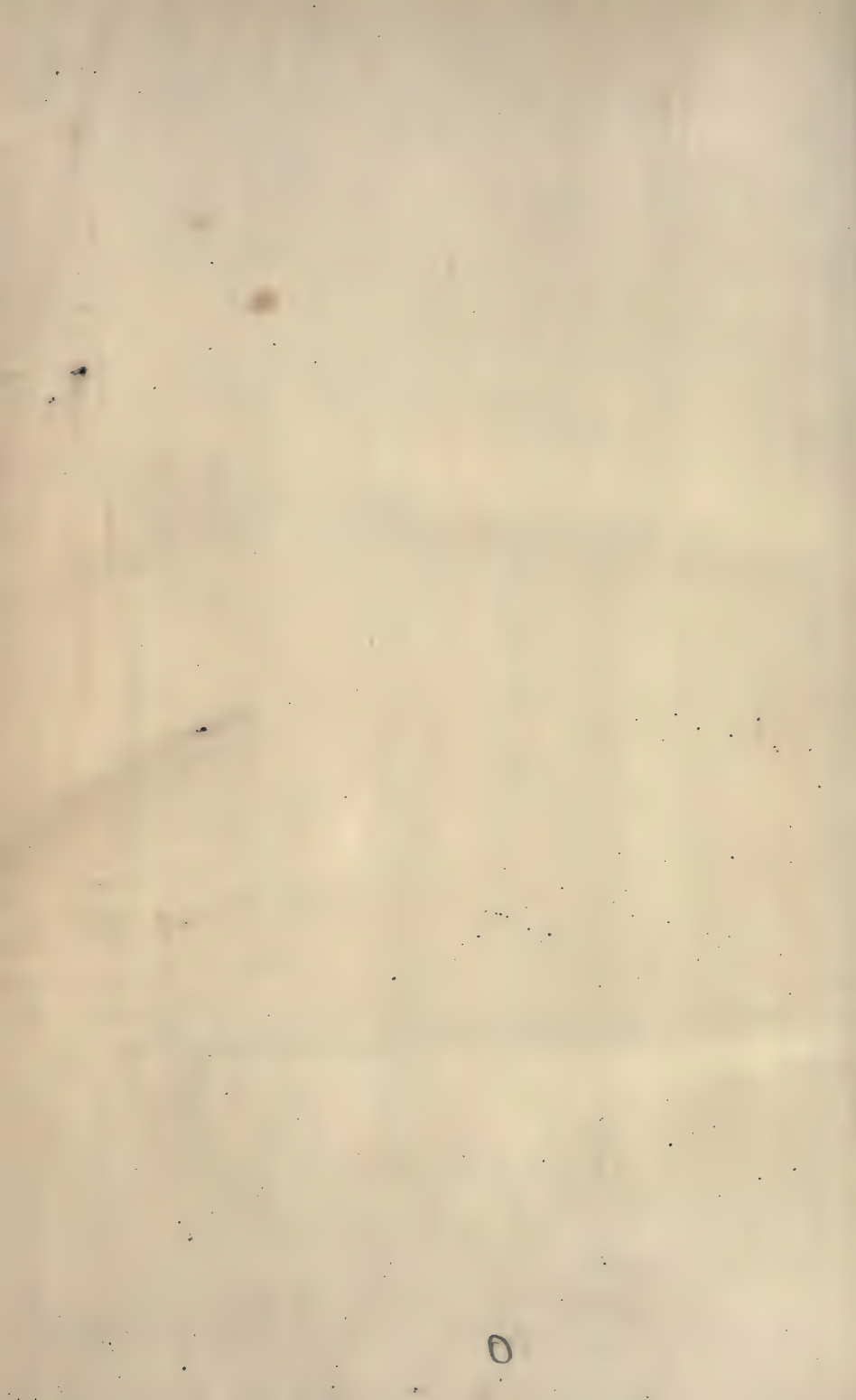


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